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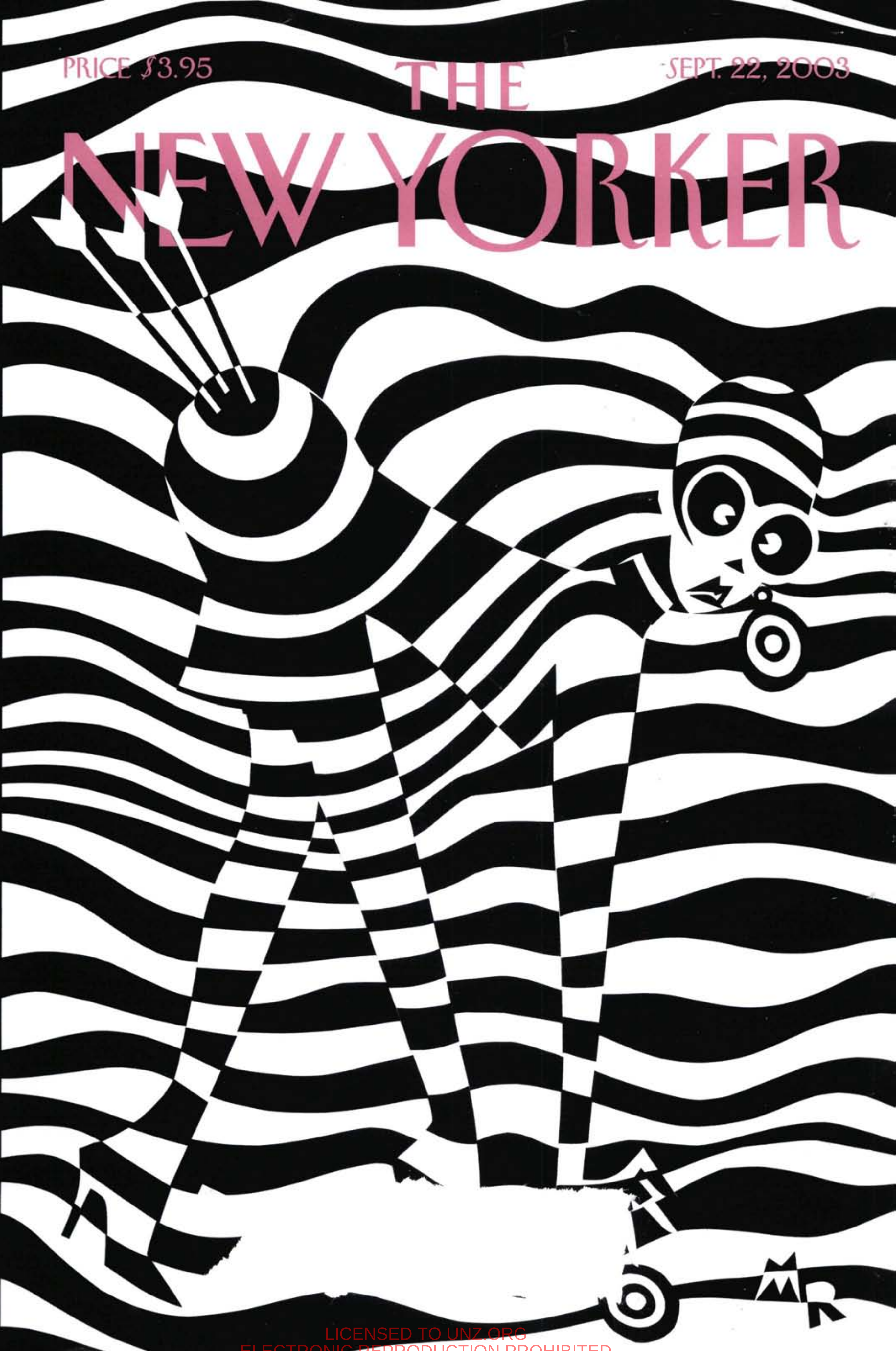

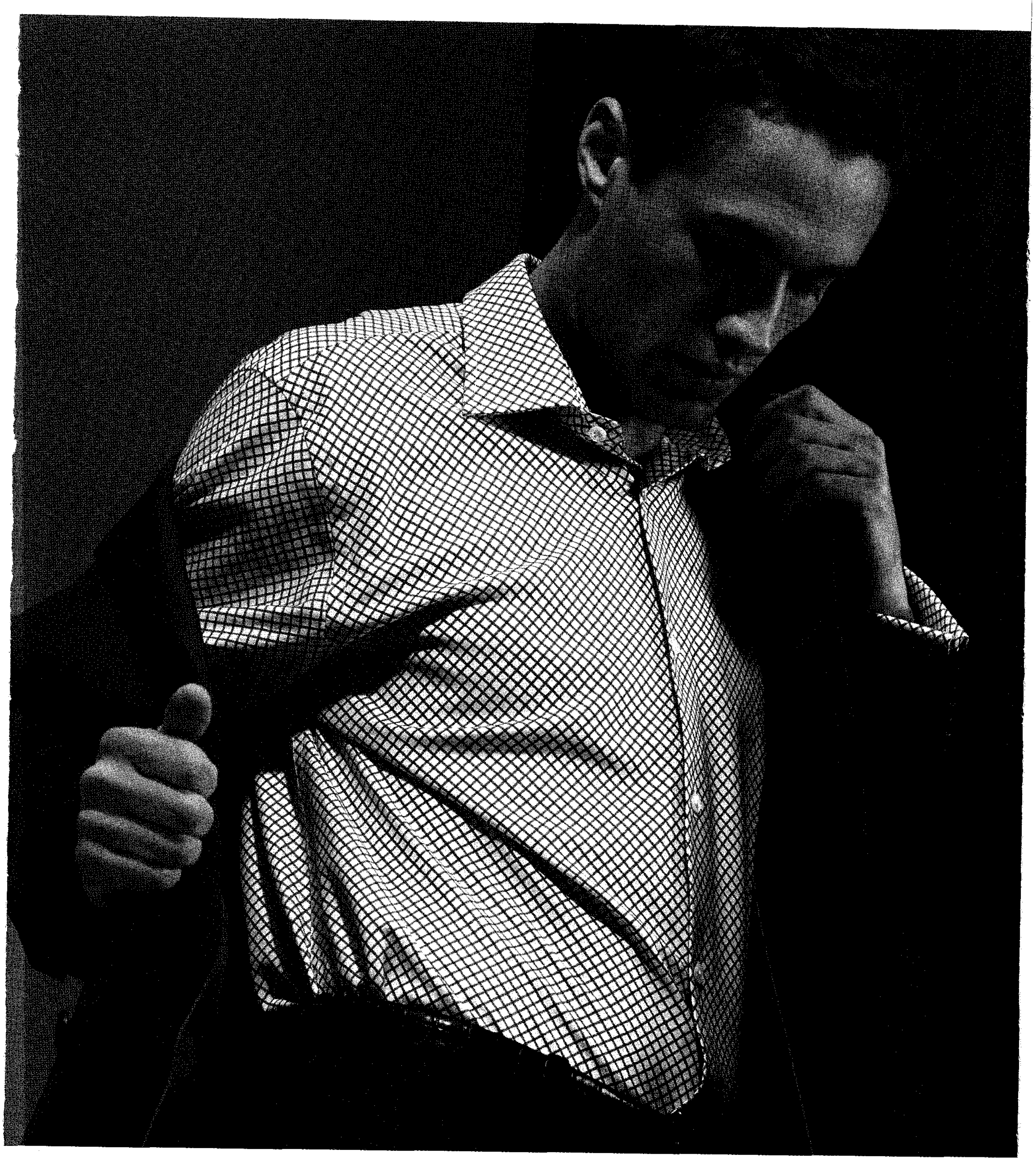

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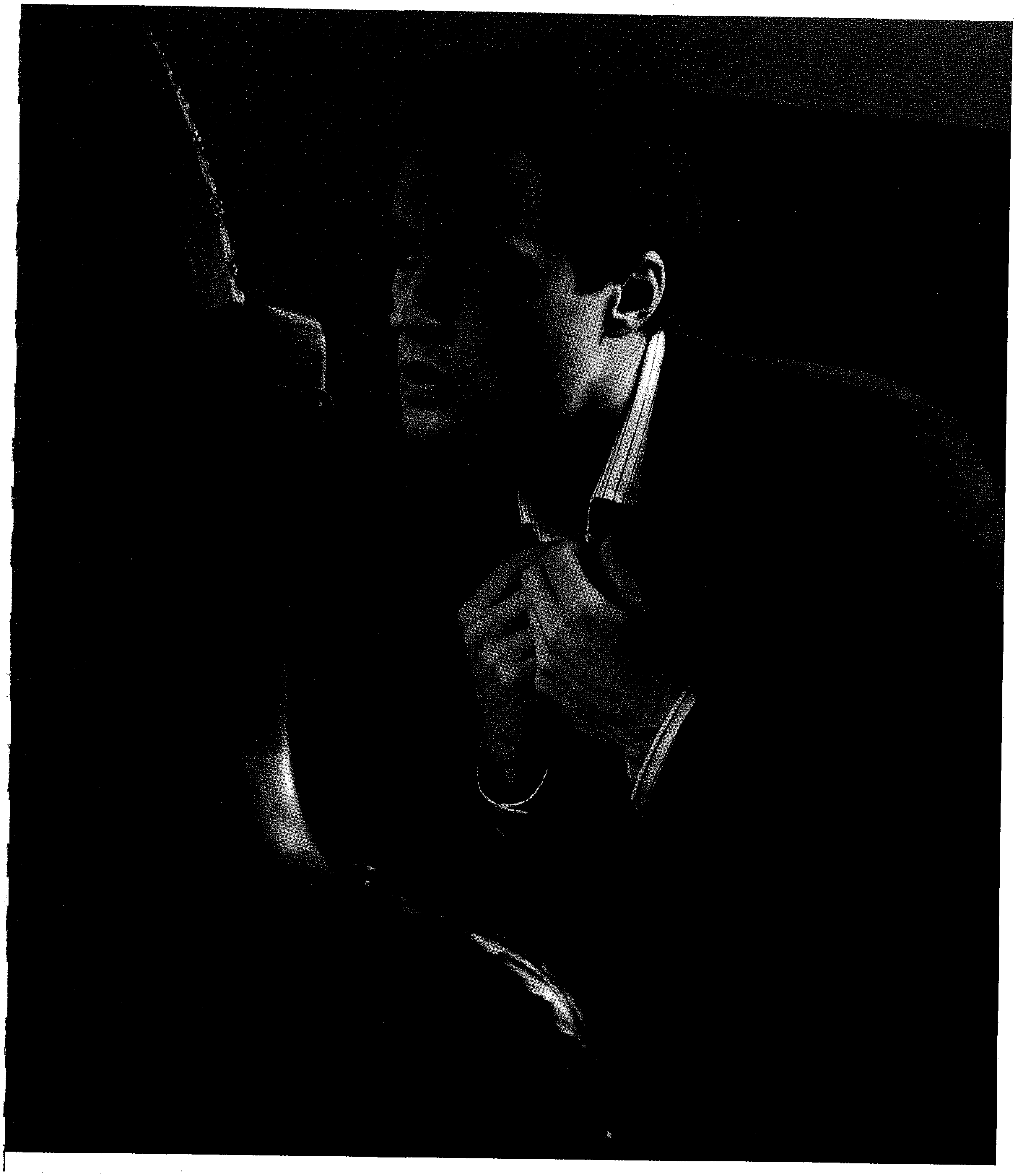

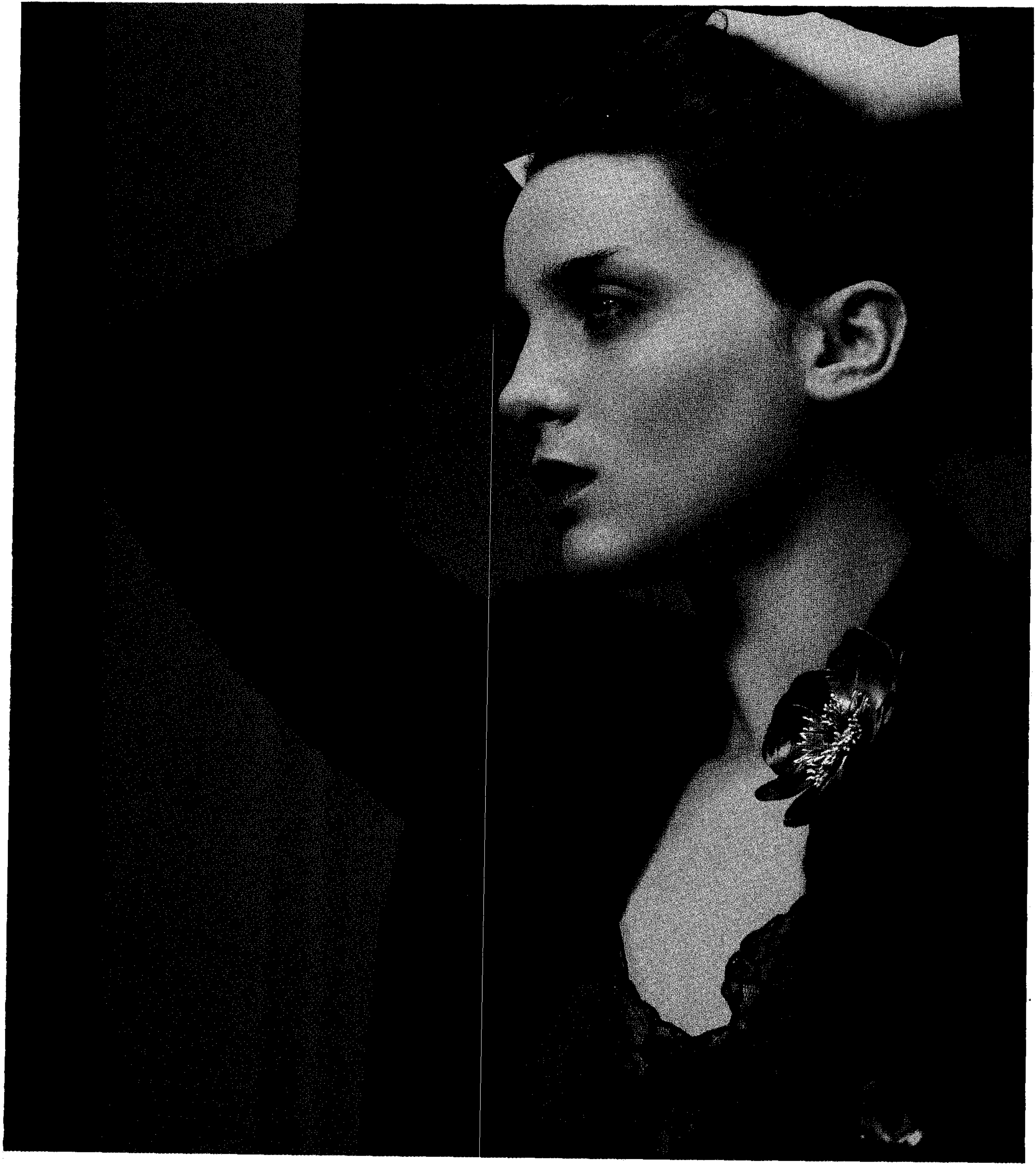

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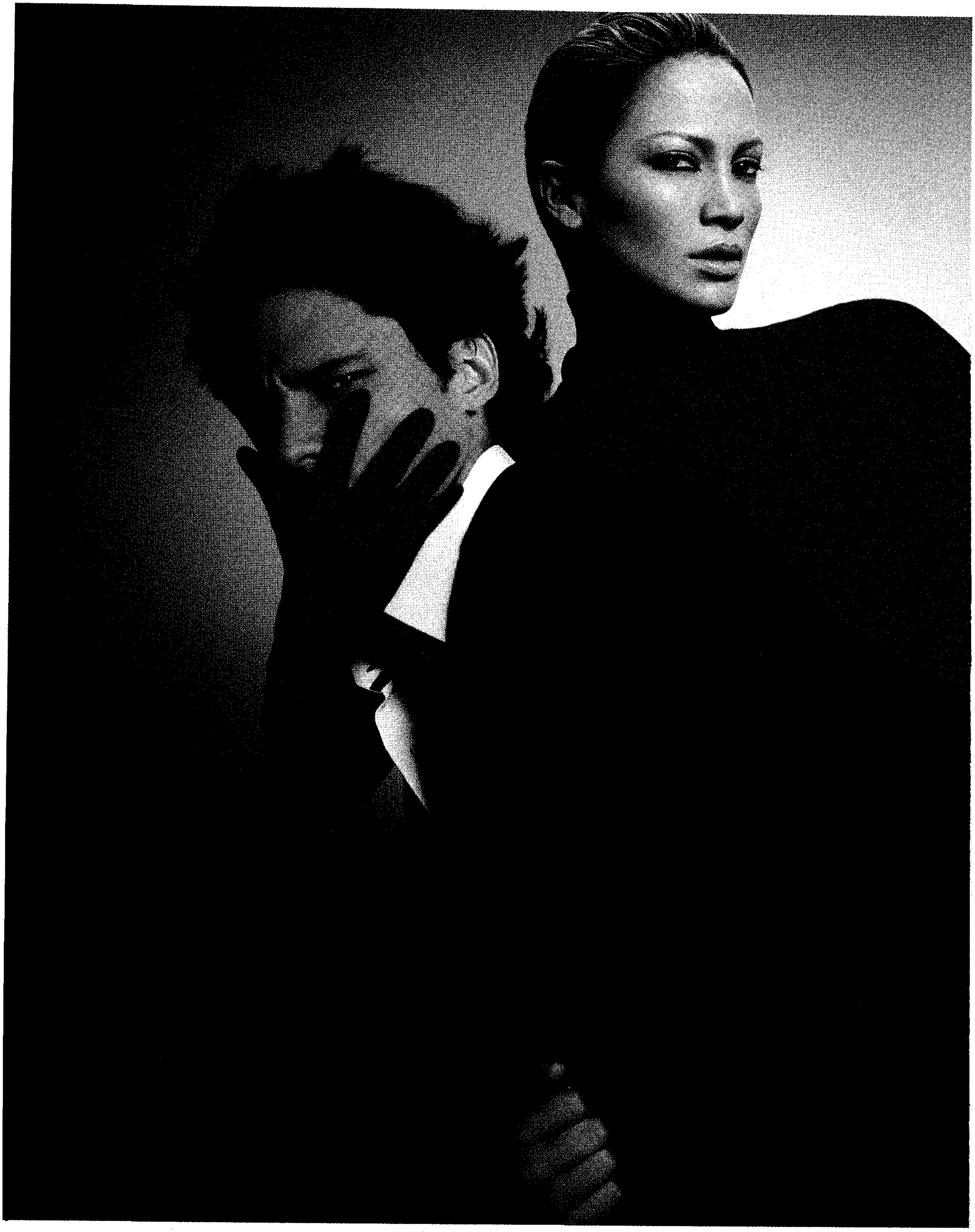

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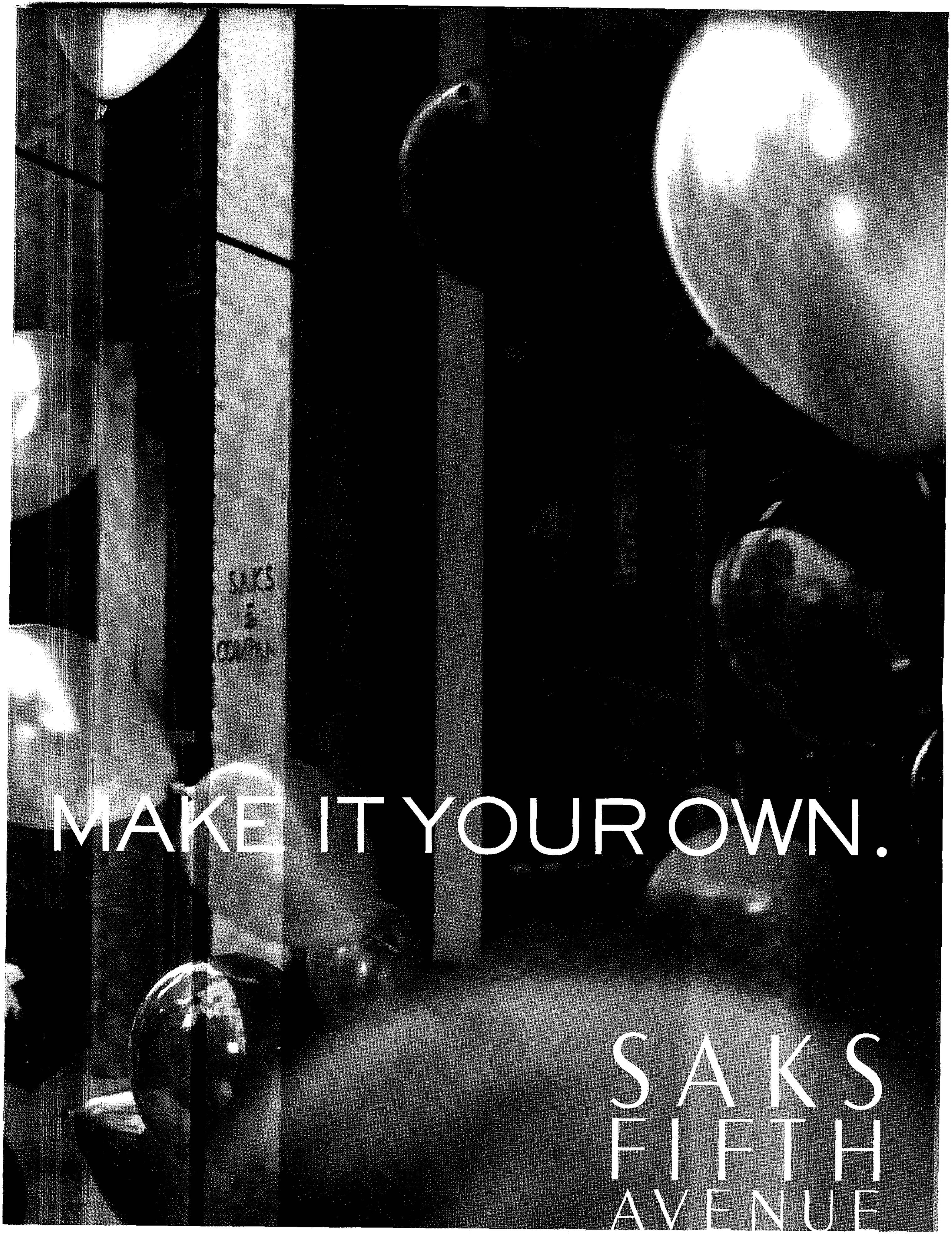
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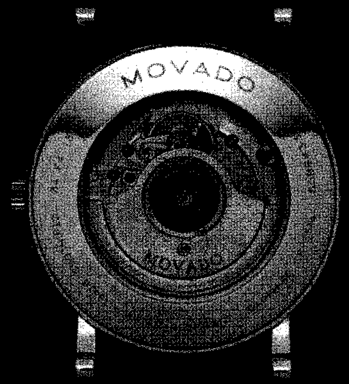

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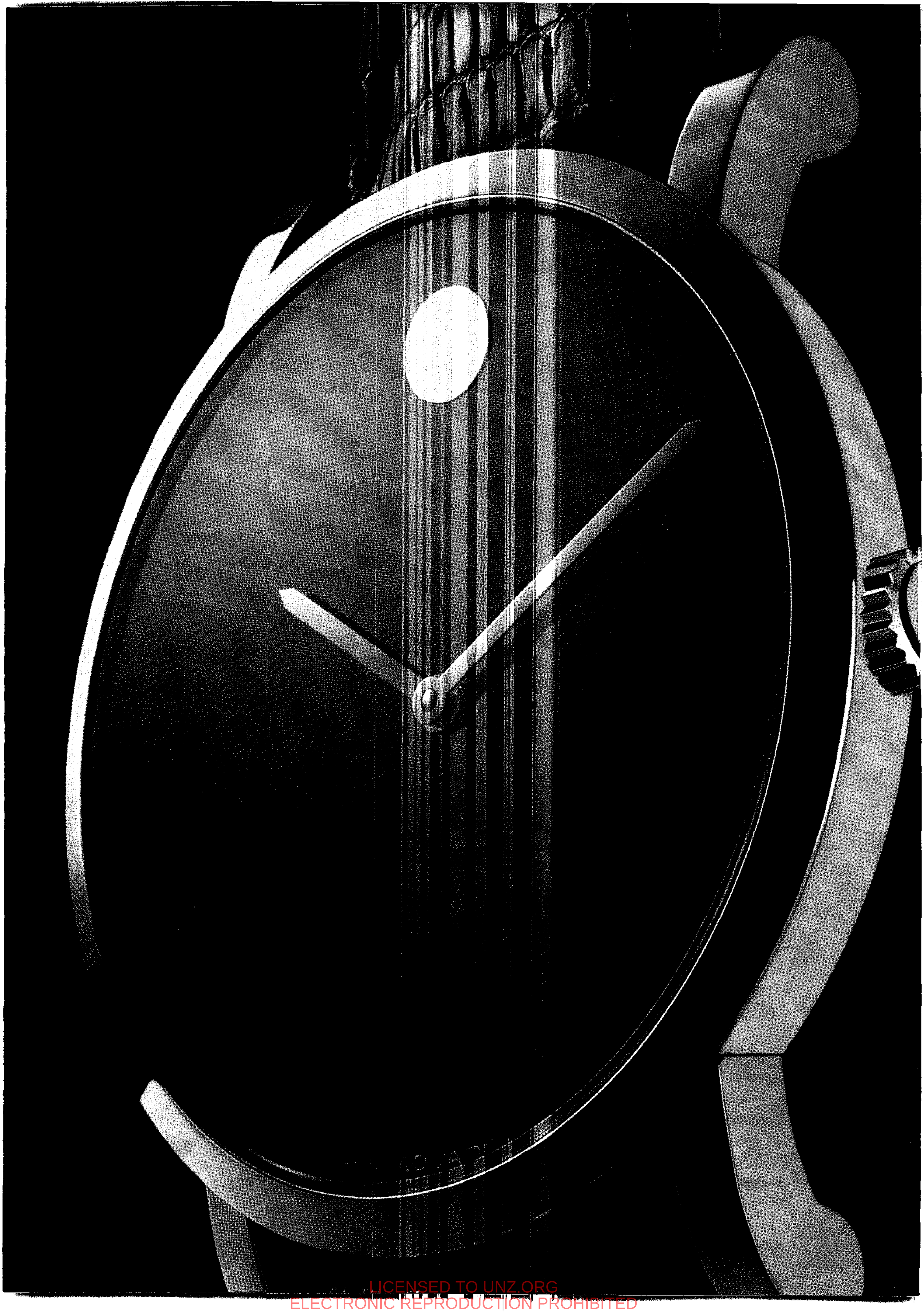

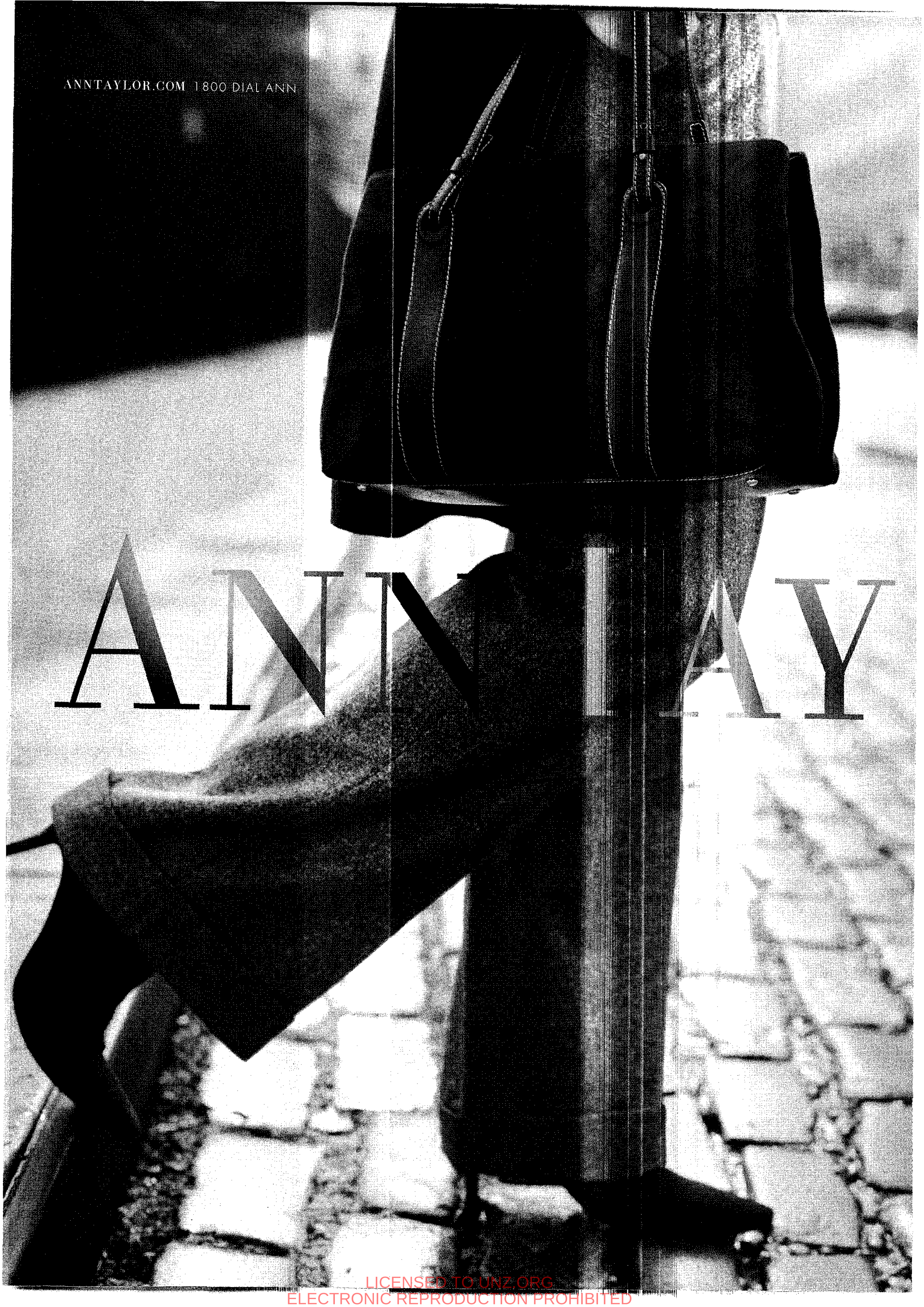
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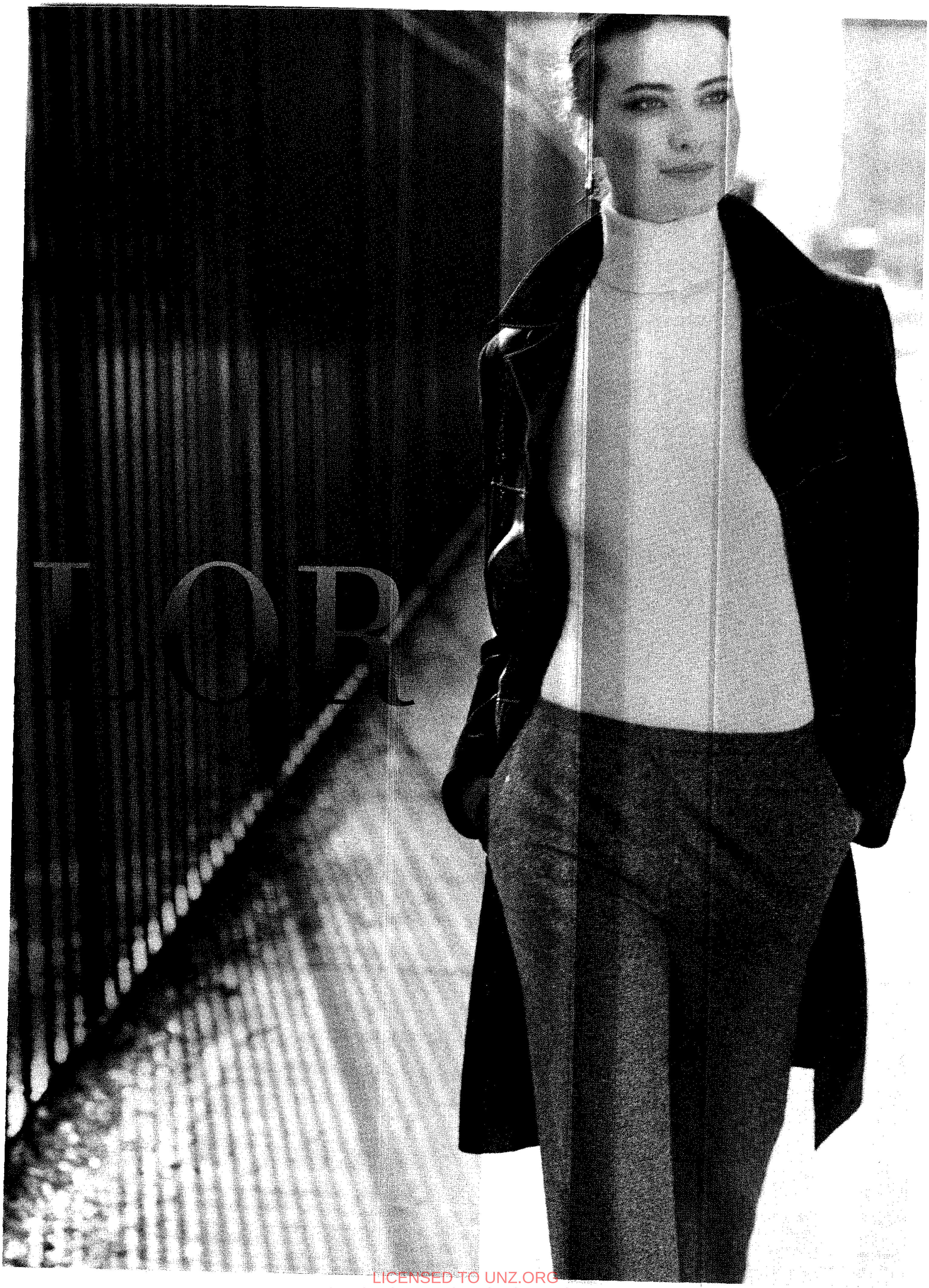
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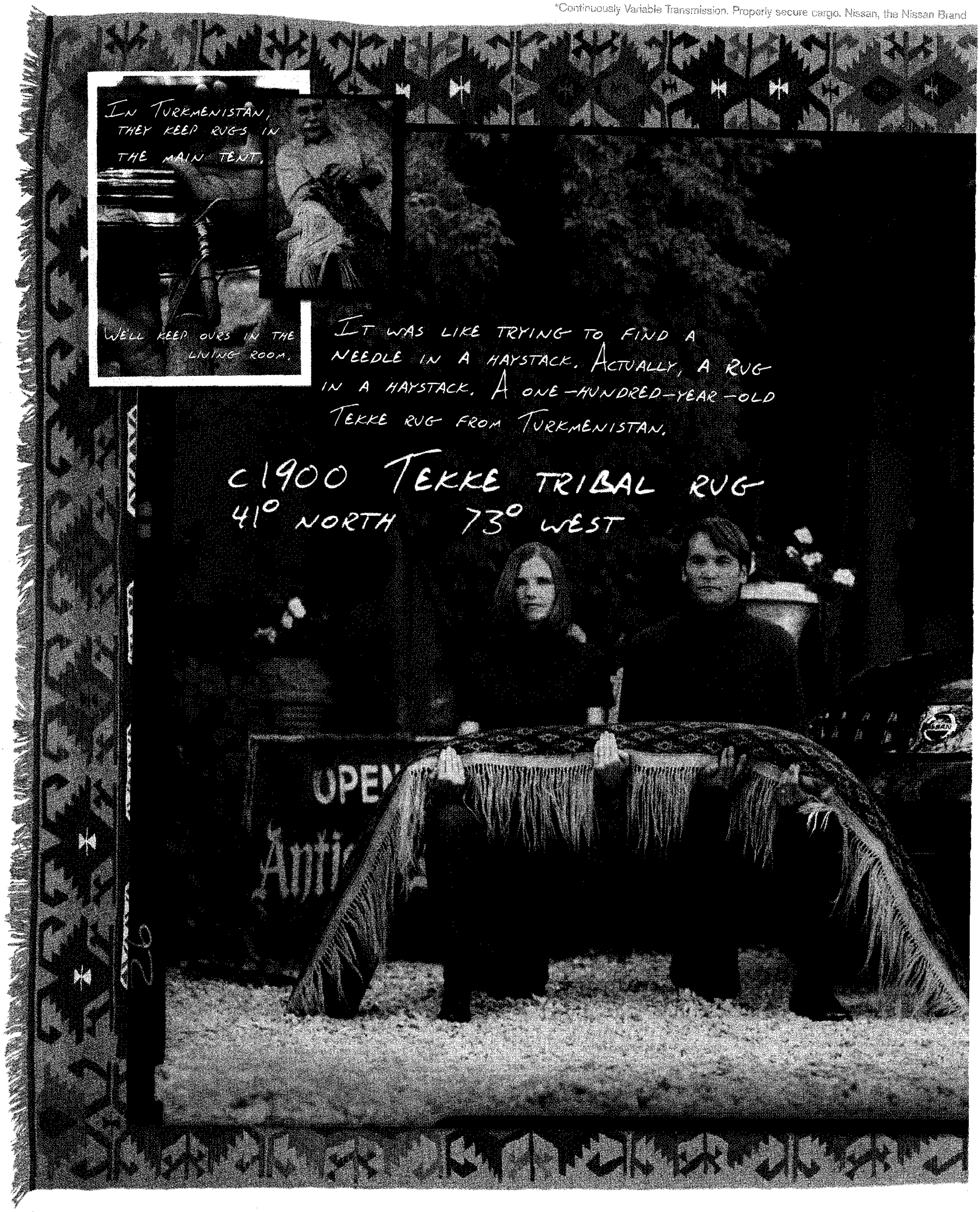
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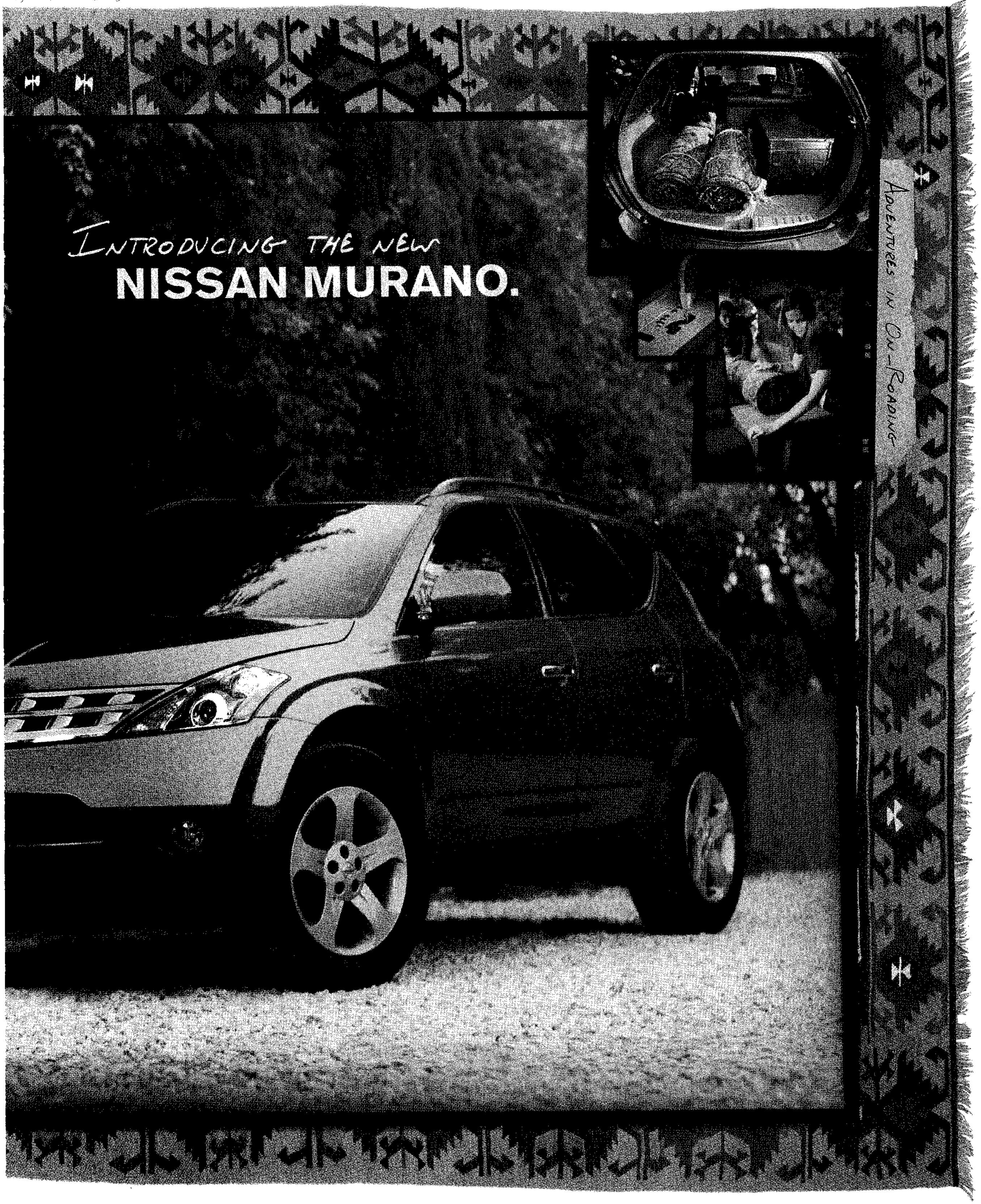
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NEW YORK

THE NEW YORKER

SEPTEMBER 22, 2003

30 GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN
With a fall preview.
81 THE TALK OF THE TOWN
Bush and war; Bill Murray's hotel life.

Francine du Plessix Gray 104 ONWARD AND UPWARD WITH THE ARTS
Out of Siberia
How a baritone became an opera idol.
George Saunders 118 SHOUTS & MURMURS
A Survey of the Literature
Simon Schama 126 THE ART WORLD
The Stone Gardener
Andy Goldsworthy's downtown memorial.
Photograph by Richard Avedon.
Thomas McGuane 135 FICTION
"Vicious Circle"

STYLE SPECIAL

Adam Gopnik 92 NEW YORK JOURNAL
Under One Roof
Is the department store dead?
Michael Specter 160 PROFILES
The Fantasist
How John Galliano changed fashion.
Photograph by Richard Avedon.
Judith Thurman 172 IN FASHION
The Divine Marquise
Luisa Casati blew a vast fortune for style.
Portfolio by Karl Lagerfeld.

THE CRITICS

BOOKS

Anthony Lane 180 *Helmut Newton's memoirs.*
John Updike 184 *A biography of John O'Hara.*
196 Briefly Noted

Continued on page 18

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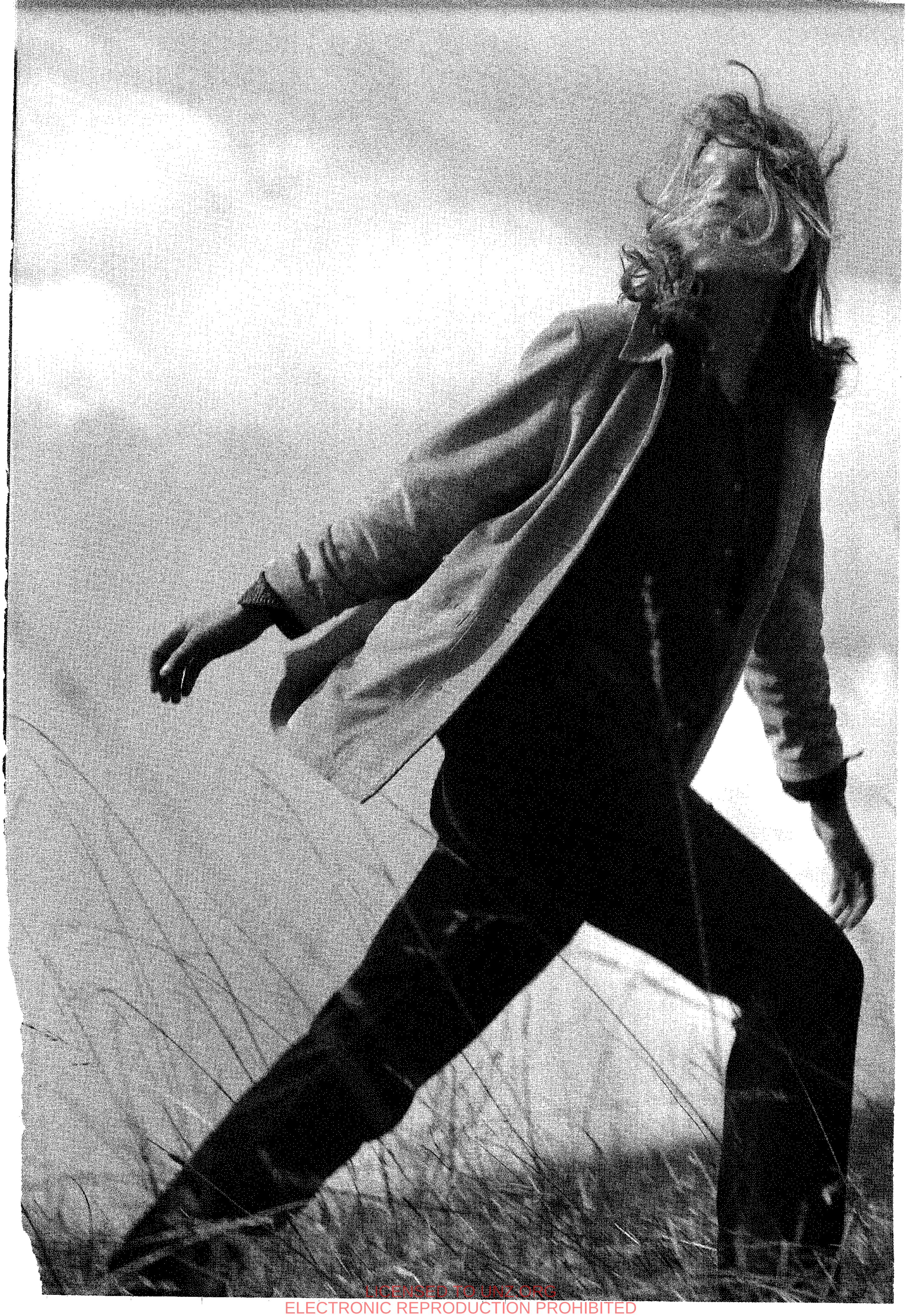

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Nancy Franklin 198 ON TELEVISION
"Carnivàle," "The Ellen DeGeneres Show."

Anthony Lane 202 THE CURRENT CINEMA
"Matchstick Men," "In This World."

POEMS

Henri Cole 115 "Gulls"
Vijay Seshadri 162 "North of Manhattan"
Katha Pollitt 189 "Lilacs in September"

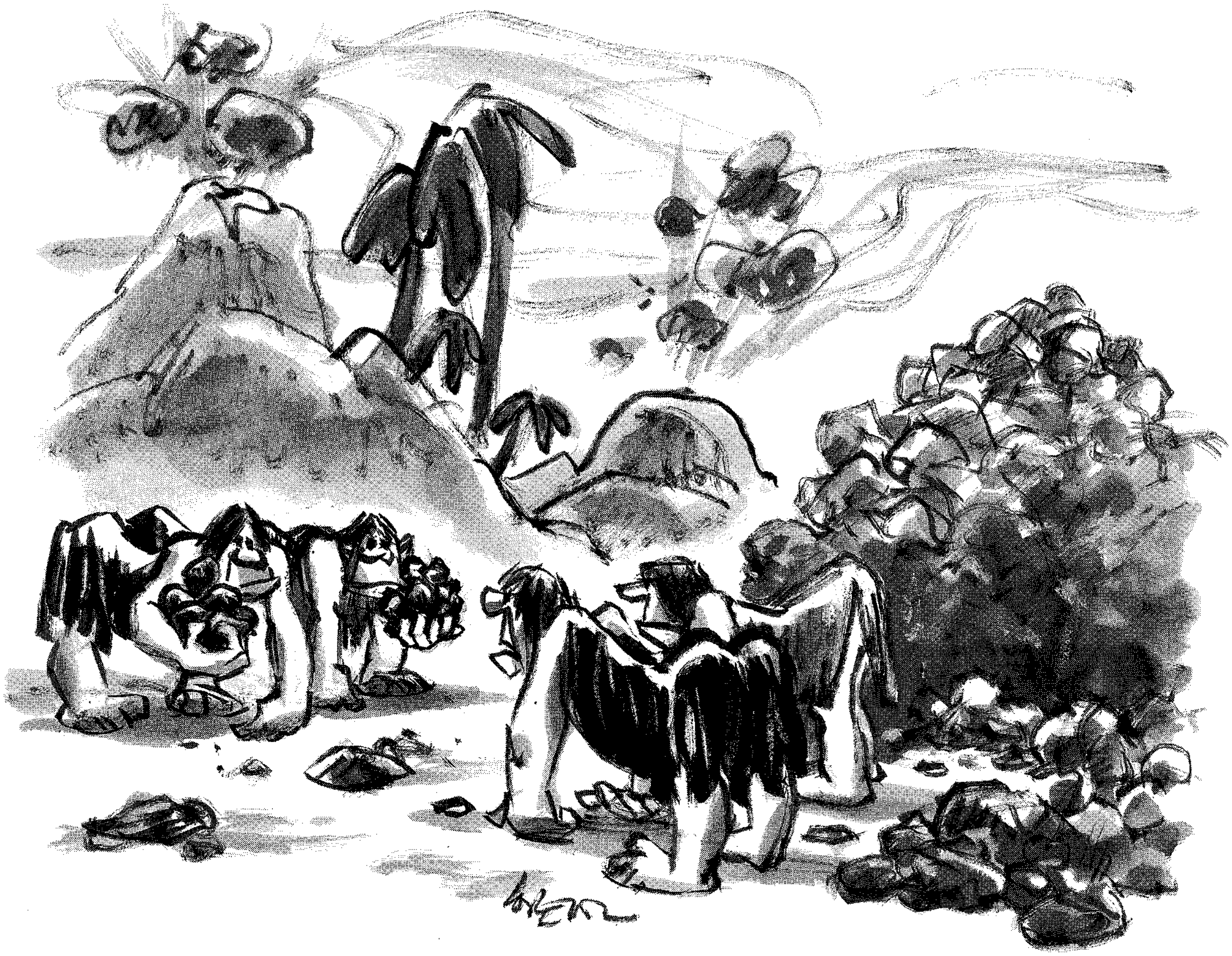
COVER

Michael Roberts "The Bottom Line"

THE BACK PAGE

Paul Rudnick 206 "Queer Eye for the Whole World"

DRAWINGS *Lee Lorenz, Robert Mankoff, Jack Ziegler, Bruce Eric Kaplan, Alex Gregory, Barbara Smaller, William Haefeli, Mick Stevens, Michael Crawford, David Sipress, Charles Barsotti, Gahan Wilson, William Hamilton, Leo Cullum, Frank Cotham, Victoria Roberts, J. C. Duffy, Roz Chast, Michael Shaw*



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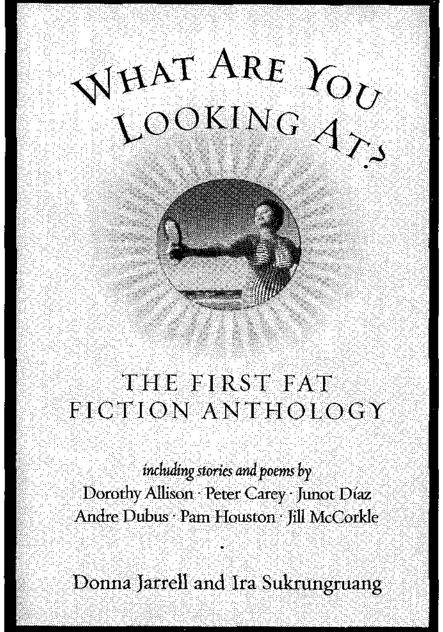
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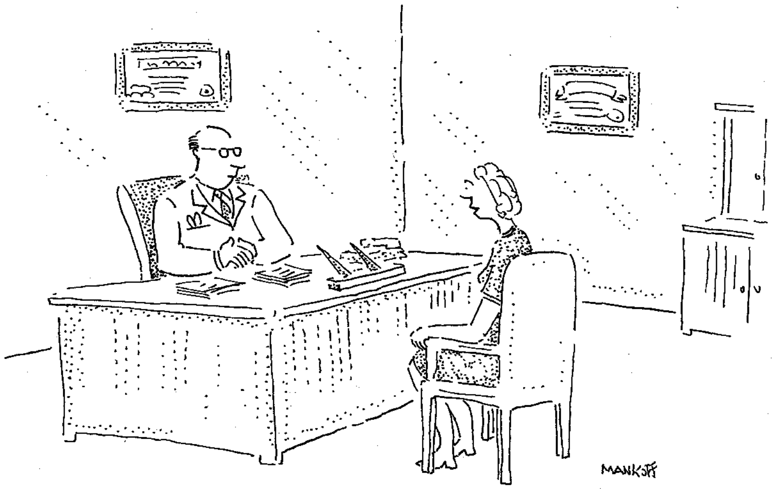

"The long and the short of it, doctor, is that I'm ready to change from a soccer mom to a NASCAR dad."

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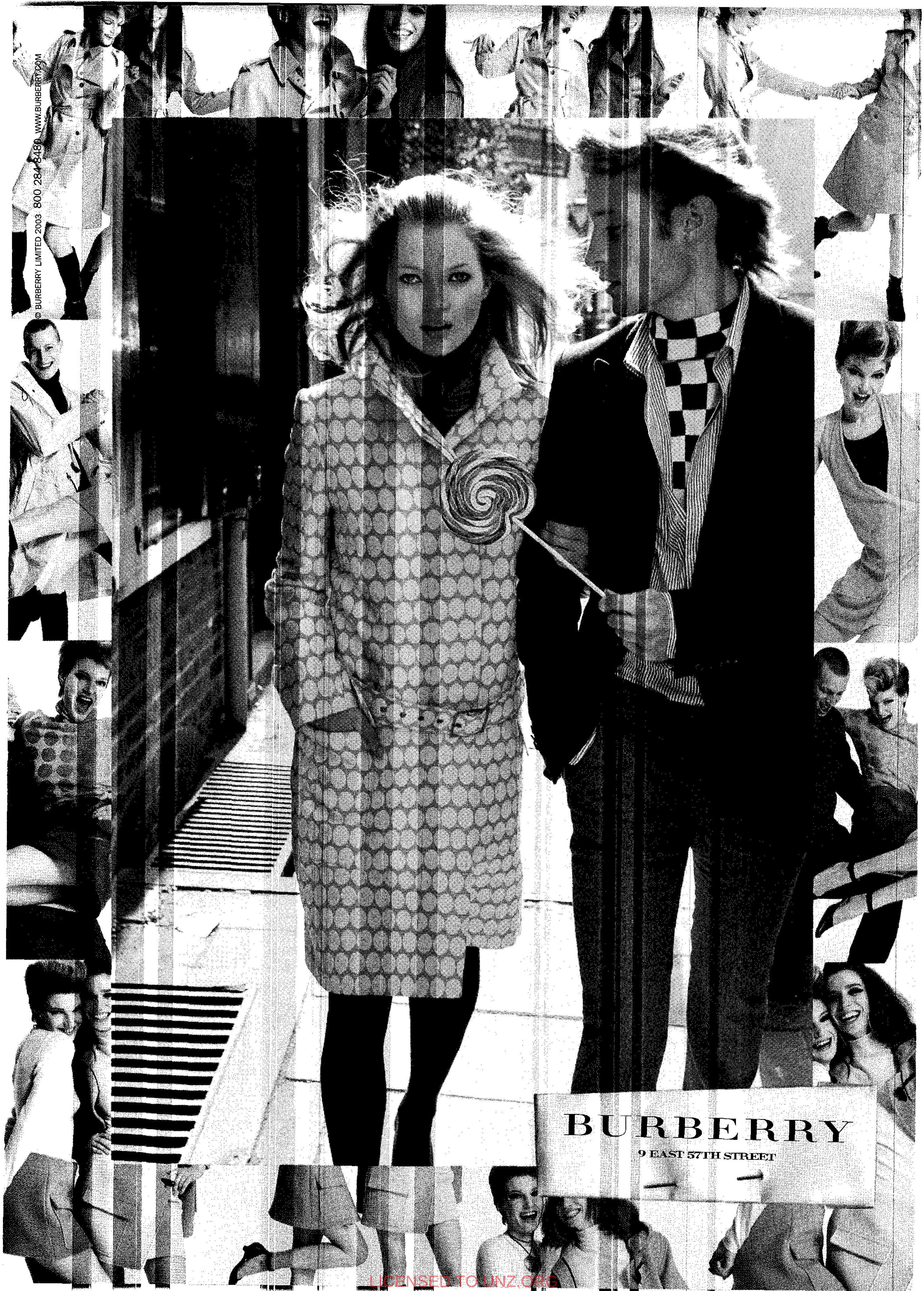
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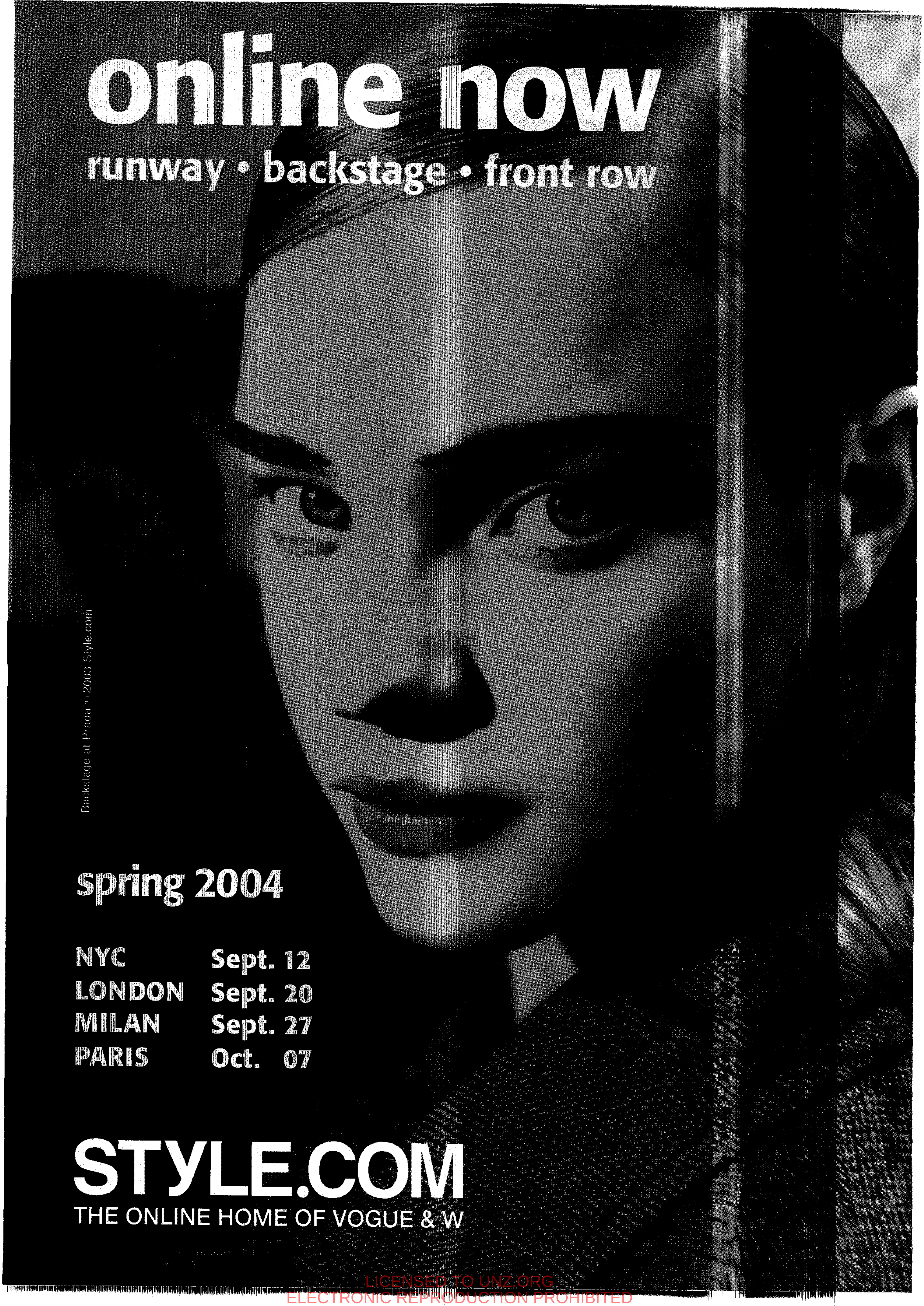

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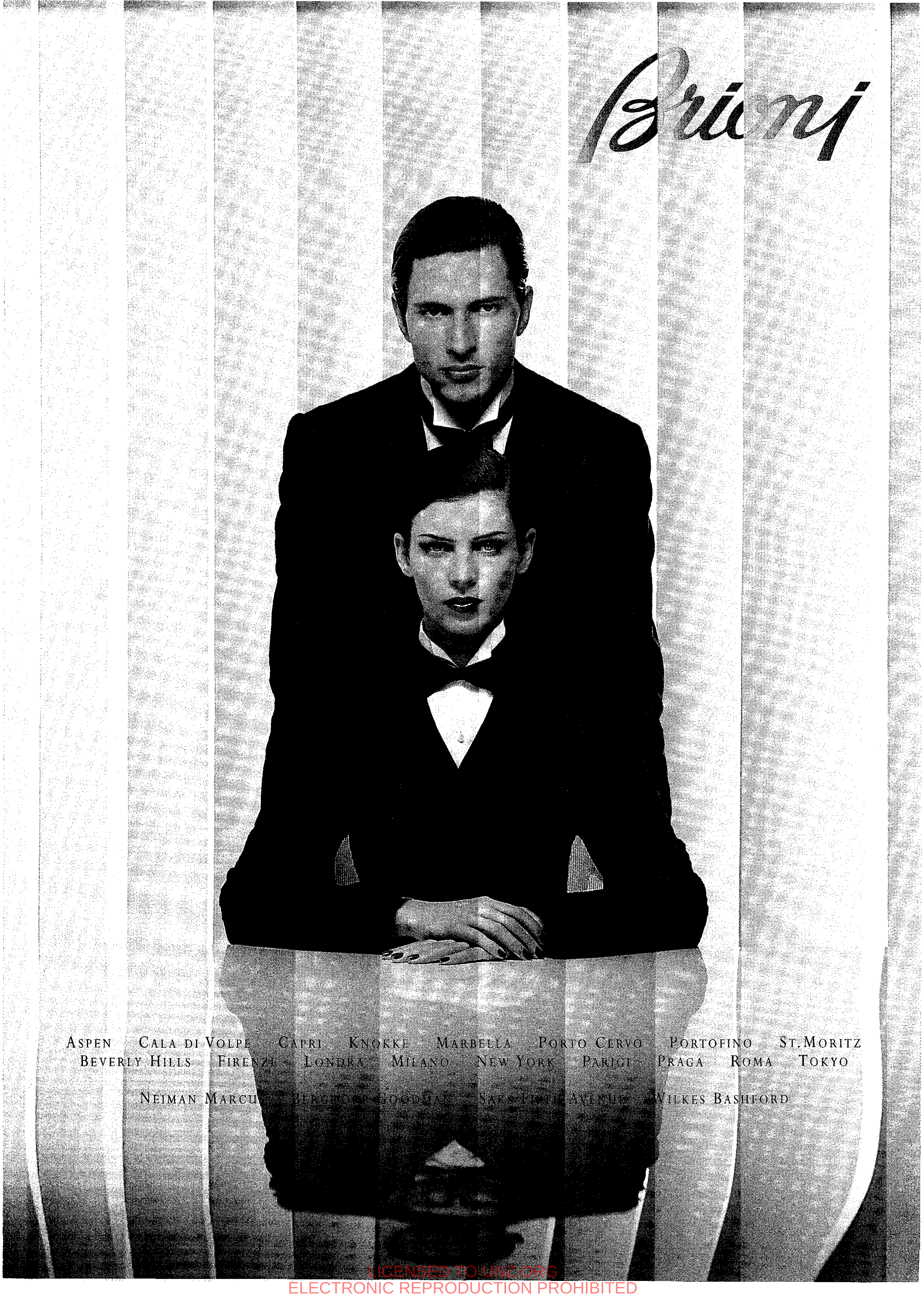

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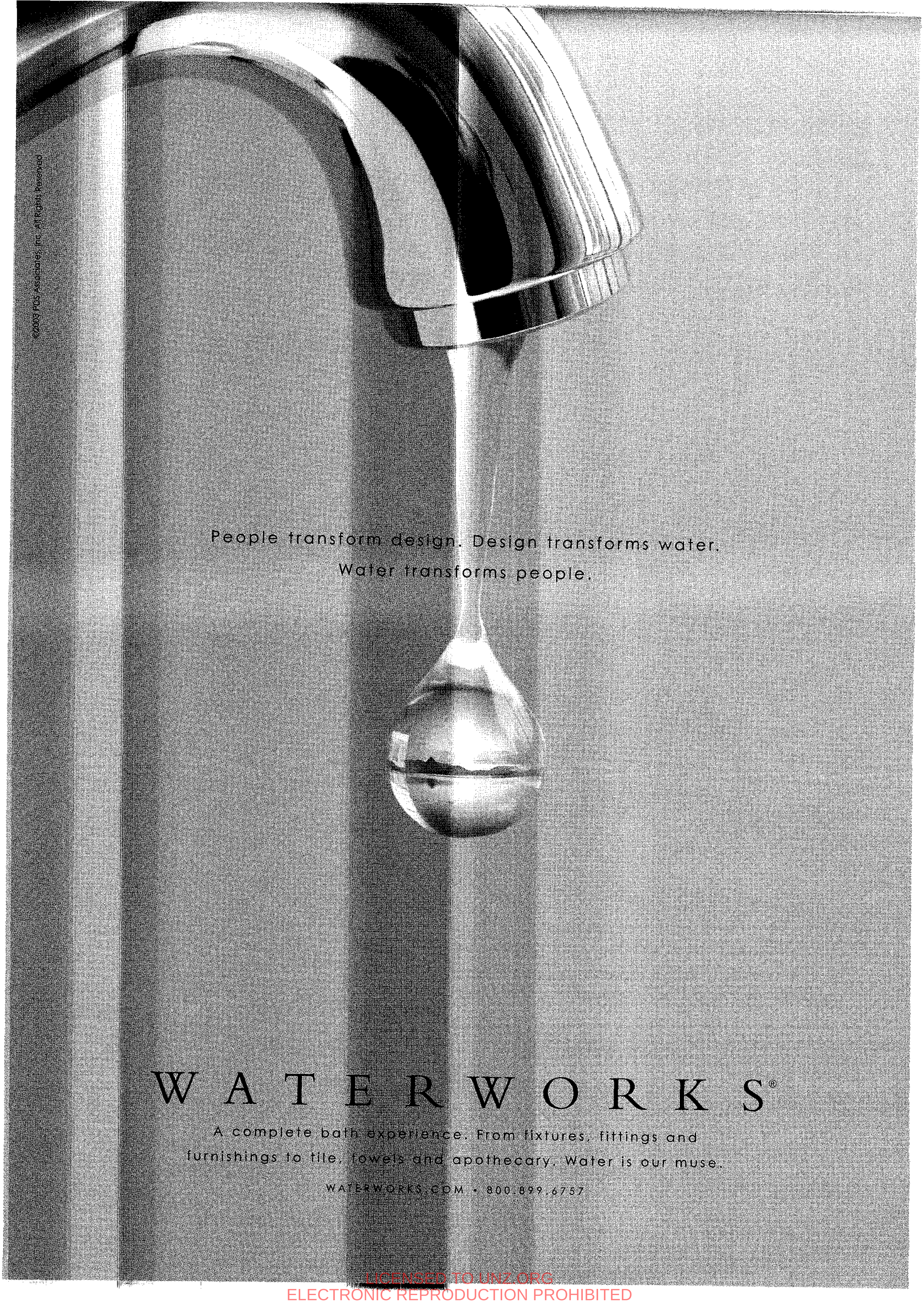
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CAN GRAY DAVIS LEAD?

Elizabeth Kolbert writes that Gray Davis "hasn't been much of a governor," citing the "current fiscal mess" and the fact that California's energy crisis crested on his watch as examples of his failures (The Talk of the Town, September 1st). But there was little that Davis could have done about the energy crisis: even the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission, which fiddled for a year before it took the mild step of setting price caps, now agrees that Californians were robbed by the Enrons of the world, thanks to a badly designed deregulation package that Davis inherited. On the other hand, Davis did set in place a robust conservation program that brought peak usage down more than ten per cent in 2001, keeping the lights on even as experts claimed that there would be weeks of darkness. The current fiscal mess is also not entirely Davis's fault, as Kolbert makes clear in her analysis of Proposition 13. More than forty governors have faced fiscal crises and budget shortfalls in recent months. It's one thing not to like Davis's style, but at least some of the criticisms levied against him are the political equivalent of urban myths.

Stanley Young
Davis, Calif.

The political system out here in California may be grossly dysfunctional, as Kolbert suggests, but the best cure may be not to abandon voter initiatives but to scrap the entire existing structure and start again. We have a weak-governor system; that means the person in the governor's office must truly lead—by exhortation, by motivation, and by example. Gray Davis's biggest failure has been his inability to perform in crises and his reluctance to be a leader. Does anyone remember any of his speeches? Does anyone here sense his vision of the state's future? I doubt it. Tracing the problems back to Proposition 13 doesn't work. Right now, California doesn't even rank in the bottom quarter of states when it comes to high property taxes. Recalling Davis appeals to voters across the political spectrum because Sacramento's gridlocked special-interest-money politics are simply no longer acceptable.

Mark G. Epstein
St. Helena, Calif.

THE MARX DAUGHTER

I read with interest Dana Goodyear's account of the poet Stanley Kunitz's outrage at the dismissal of Miriam Marx, Groucho's daughter, from Bennington College, in 1949, for a "curfew violation" ("The Gardener," September 1st). I remember the Miriam Affair well, as it was the high point of my sophomore year. Miriam, as I recall, had loudly driven her old Ford into the gated, no-cars area of campus at some unusual hour. (At the time, we didn't really have a curfew.) There had been a slew of other perceived offenses, and she had been warned that the next time she would be out. Since graduation was a mere six weeks away, and Miriam was a senior, a number of faculty members thought that this was cruel and unusual. There were mass meetings, and, in the fallout, several faculty members resigned. Noteworthy to me was the loss of the teacher of my short-story class. Because the term was almost over, a series of guest teachers filled in. One, Wallace Fowlie, spent an entire class describing in mournful tones the lives of writers who had committed suicide, shattering literary aspirations left and right. Another, Shirley Jackson, who lived nearby, gave us a first public reading of "The Lottery." (She later told me that she had written it in her head on trips to the supermarket, pushing her baby's stroller.) Miriam Marx was apparently unfazed by these events: she became the envy of her former classmates by getting hired almost immediately by *Mademoiselle.*

Gail Newman
Cleveland, Ohio

•

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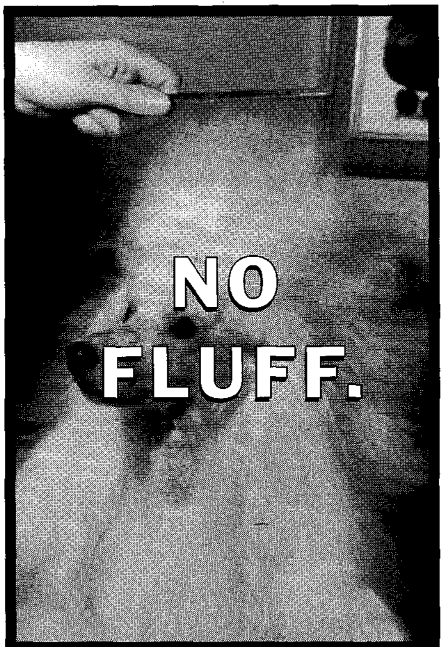

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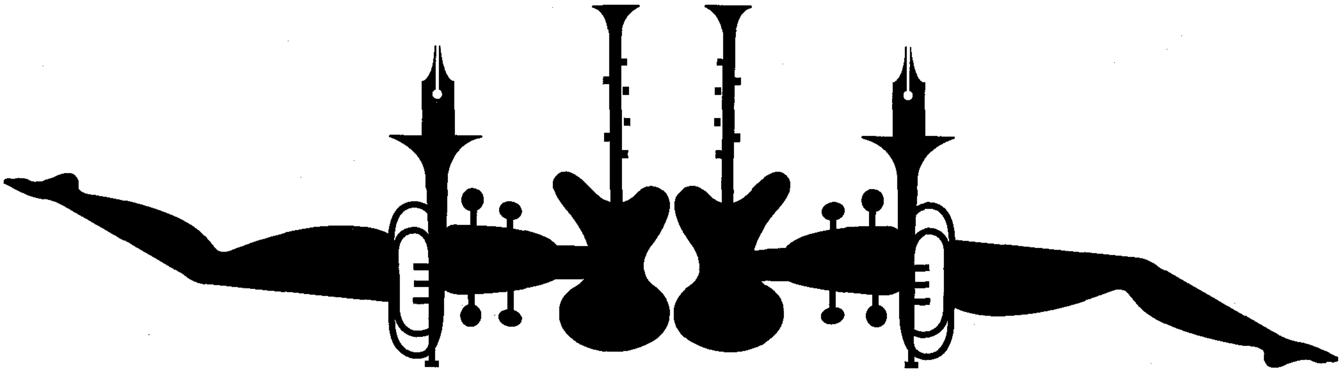
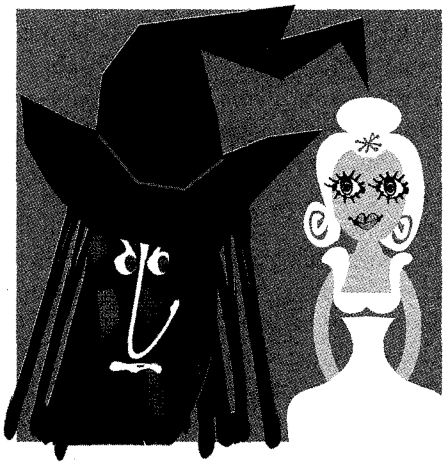


THE THEATRE

The upcoming season may inspire a feeling of déjà vu in audiences, as many familiar stage faces return to Broadway. Kerry Butler, the feisty young comedienne who until recently played Tracy Turnblad's red-headed friend Penny Pingleton in "Hairspray," now becomes Audrey, the blond bimbette muse of the nudnick florist Seymour in "Little Shop of Horrors" (opening Oct. 2). Eileen Atkins and John Lithgow star in "The Retreat from Moscow," a divorce drama (Oct. 23), and Maggie Smith and Dianne Wiest play two women linked by their love for one man in a play called "The Breath of Life," arriving from London late in the season. The new musical "Wicked," based on Gregory Maguire's novel about the witches of Oz (Oct. 30), stars Broadway babies Kristin Chenoweth and Idina Menzel, with the ageless Joel Grey as the wizard. Actors aren't the only ones with marquee pull: the director Michael Greif ("Rent") is the force behind "Never Gonna Dance" (Dec. 4), a musical based on the Fred Astaire and Ginger Rogers movie "Swing Time," and the actor and playwright Bill Irwin presents a year of his shows at the Signature Theatre Company, beginning with "Harlequin Studies" (Sept. 21).

But there's another reason for the double takes in the upcoming season: many of the top-billed names are more commonly seen on the silver screen or the small screen than on the boards. Heather Graham, perhaps best known as Rollergirl from Paul Thomas Anderson's "Boogie Nights," makes her New York stage début in a new play by Craig Wright called "Recent Tragic Events," about a blind date on September 12, 2001 (Sept. 28); the "X-Men" heartthrob Hugh Jackman becomes another pop icon, the Aussie singer-songwriter Peter Allen, in the bio-musical "The Boy from Oz" (Oct. 16); Ellen Burstyn plays the title character in "Oldest Living Confederate Widow Tells All," based on Allan Gurganus's novel (Nov. 17); and, in a cinematic triple threat, Ashley Judd, Ned Beatty, and Jason Patric lead a new production of "Cat on a Hot Tin Roof" (Nov. 2).



"Wicked," coming to the Gershwin.

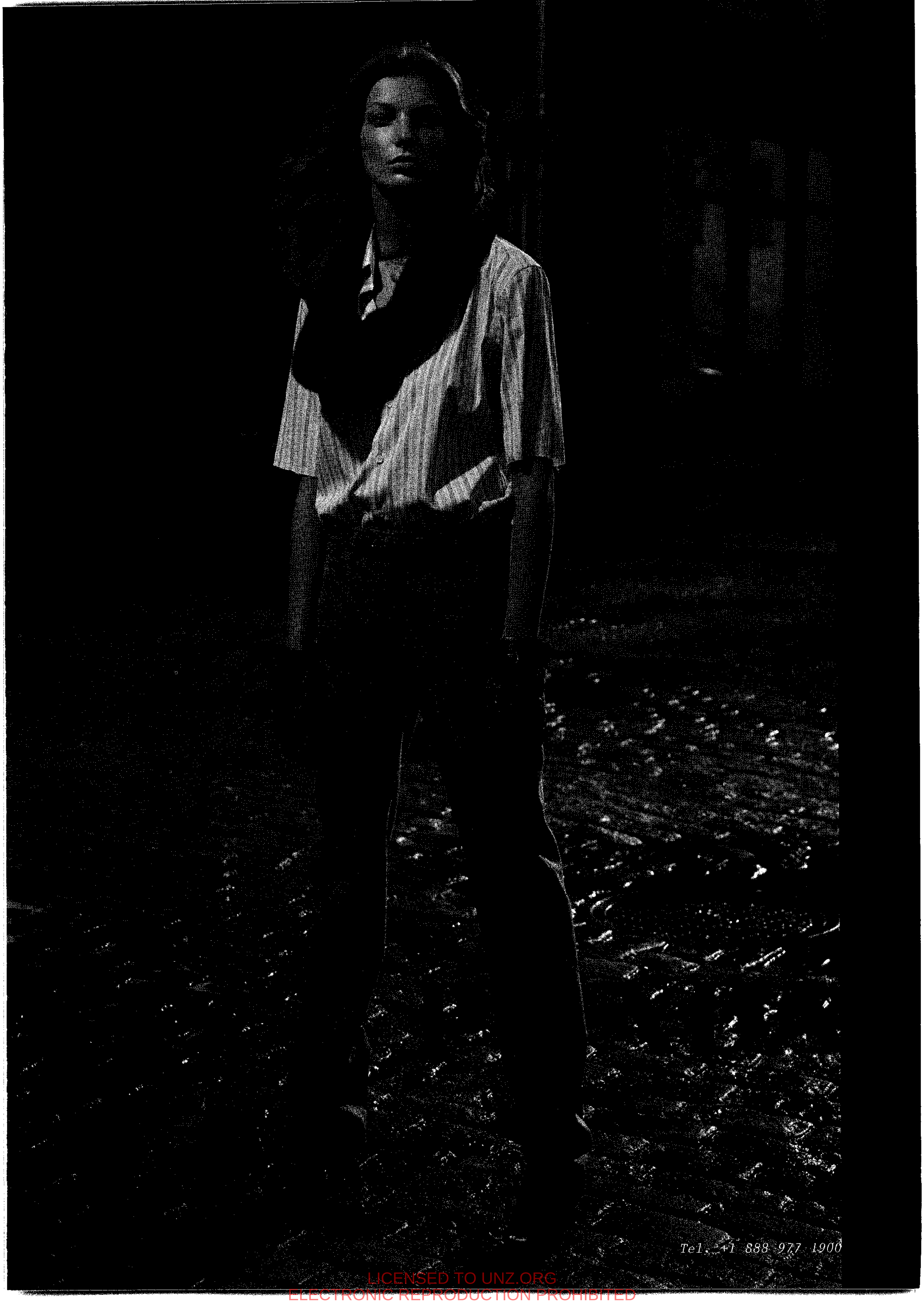
Look for the Broadway début of the seventies pinup Farrah Fawcett, who plays a former beauty-pageant queen in Nancy Hasty's play "Bobbi Boland" (Nov. 24). And there's a rosy forecast for two other projects: "Taboo" (Nov. 13), a bio-musical about the eighties recording artist Boy George that Rosie O'Donnell is producing, and "Rose's Dilemma" (Dec. 9), a new comedy by Neil Simon that features a leading performance by Mary Tyler Moore. But the biggest cluster of stars will appear in Lincoln Center's mammoth production of "Henry IV" (Nov. 20), in which Billy Crudup, Ethan Hawke, Kevin Kline, Audra McDonald, and Richard Easton traverse both parts of Shakespeare's history.

A different kind of star-spotting will occur at plays with less established headliners, such as "Omnium Gatherum," brought to New York by the British director Will Frears, in which a Martha Stewart-style hostess gives a vociferous dinner for other crypto-celebrities (Sept. 25). And there's also the excitement of watching a star being born, in the form of Julia Jordan, a young playwright who has not one but four new plays this year. Upcoming is "Tatjana in Color," a drama about a twelve-year-old artist's model for Egon Schiele, set in turn-of-the-century Vienna (Oct. 30).

DANCE

The man of the hour is George Balanchine, whose hundredth birthday will be celebrated by New York City Ballet (which he co-founded) with nearly two hundred performances, beginning Nov. 23, featuring more than fifty dances choreographed by Balanchine and sev-

ILLUSTRATIONS BY LAURIE ROSENWALD



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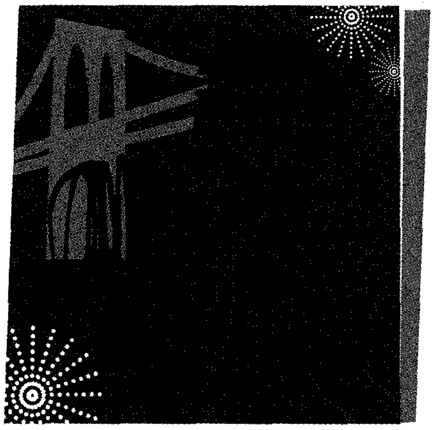
eral new ballets commissioned from Boris Eifman, Peter Martins, Susan Stroman, and Christopher Wheeldon. The Balanchine muse Suzanne Farrell anticipates the centennial with her company at the Brooklyn Center for the Performing Arts (Oct. 12). Among the season's other classical highlights: American Ballet Theatre (beginning Oct. 22) gives a première of Robert Hill's "Dorian," based on the Oscar Wilde character Dorian Gray, and revivals of work by Antony Tudor (which audiences got a tantalizing glimpse of last season) and Frederick Ashton; and the new British ballet company George Piper Dances has its first season at the Joyce with local premières of the Christopher Wheeldon dance "Mesmeric" and of Russell Maliphant's "Torsion" (Nov. 4). The modern end of the spectrum features the daring German group Ballett Frankfurt at BAM (Sept. 30); the breathtaking "Kaash," by London's Akram Khan group at the Joyce (Oct. 14); and new music by Radiohead and the Icelandic band Sigur Rós, choreographed by Merce Cunningham in "Split Sides" at BAM (Oct. 14). And Ronald K. Brown's Nina Simone tribute, "Come Ye," has its début at the Joyce (Oct. 21), to be followed by three weeks of tapping by Savion Glover (starting Dec. 16).



Broadcast plays in Brooklyn.

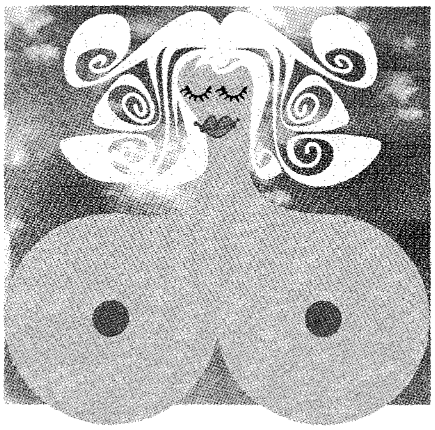
NIGHT LIFE

Following a summer full of equivocal pleasures (the biggest block party in city history, otherwise known as the blackout of '03; the opening of the rapper Jay-Z's upscale sports bar, 40/40, where V.I.P. Room seating starts at $1,500), it's a relief to know that one of life's more straightforward satisfactions—rock and roll—continues to enjoy a renaissance here.

Big albums are due next month from two of New York rock's brightest stars: "Echoes," the début by the disco-punk quartet the Rapture, and "Room on Fire," the long-awaited sophomore release from the Strokes. The live-music scene that the bands cut their teeth on is thriving, though much of it has moved out to Brooklyn, which is now home to many noteworthy clubs featuring local and touring acts. Two of them, Southpaw and Warsaw, are booked by veterans of venerable area nightspots: respectively, Todd Abramson, who also books the popular Hoboken club Maxwell's, and Steve Weitzman, formerly of the Village Underground and the late, great Tramps. The Amsterdam quartet Bettie Serveert (Oct. 8) and the U.K. space-pop combo Broadcast (Oct. 16) will stop by Southpaw. Warsaw will be visited by the high-octane English rockers Supergrass (Oct. 8), Hoboken's finest alt-rock trio, Yo La Tengo (Oct. 10), and the alt-country mainstay Jay Farrar (Oct. 17). And rock bands are even popping up in such unexpected places as the dance palace Webster Hall (which is only natural, in a way, as the club is located in the legendary Ritz Theatre): the British bands Stereophonics (Sept. 22) and Echo and the Bunnymen (Oct. 25) will soon shake its glitzy walls.

Stereophonics and Echo and the Bunnymen are only two of the acts leading a miniature British invasion of New York this fall. Elvis Costello plays a pair of shows at Town Hall (Sept. 22 and Sept. 24); the Welsh visionaries Super Furry Animals visit Irving Plaza (Oct. 3-4); Radiohead headlines at Madison Square Garden (Oct. 9-10); and the modfather Paul Weller, late of the Jam and the Style Council and now more than a decade into a rewarding solo career, has plans to appear at Town Hall (Oct. 27).

New works from established jazz and vocal artists are a staple of any fall scene. Few artists are as established as the singer Frank Sinatra, who will be appearing at Radio City Music Hall Oct. 8-19 in the form of a theatrical production that includes a forty-piece orchestra, the Rockettes, and technologically enhanced never-before-seen concert footage of him. The swinging young guitar master John Pizzarelli is the host. Back in the land of the living, the obsessively inventive trumpeter Dave Douglas unveils yet another new band at the Village Vanguard Oct. 21-26; the outfit, which is called Word and incorporates the vocalist Andy Bey and the avant-garde trombonist Roswell Rudd, is offbeat even by Douglas's wild standards. And finally, on Oct. 23 and Oct. 25, Jazz at Lincoln Center celebrates the genius of the French pianist and composer Martial Solal, who will present newly commissioned work, abetted by the brilliantly improvisatory saxophonists Steve Lacy and Phil Woods.



John Currin's work at the Whitney.

ART

El Greco will preside over a season engrossed in the once and future state of painting; his retrospective at the Metropolitan Museum opens Oct. 7. The towering Mannerist (1541-1614) made Byzantine icons in his youth, then studied Italian art in Venice and Rome before settling in Toledo, where he set a standard of genius for Spanish artists of later centuries, from Velázquez to Goya to Picasso. El Greco's flamelike figures can seem like caricatures in memory, but this show displays the pictures in all their writhing energy.

Another extreme painter comes to town right on the heels of El Greco: the Met hosts a travelling retrospective devoted to the works of Philip Guston (Oct. 28). His raucous and masterly late style remains an idiosyncratic high point in recent art history. James Rosenquist will fill the Guggenheim with his wonderful early Pop surrealism—culminating in the great anti-war pro-giddiness

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mural "F-111"—and his questionable subsequent bids to be our candy-colorist Tiepolo (Oct. 17). Nineteenth-century Americans, including George Inness at the National Academy of Design, and Sanford Gifford at the Met, may prove newly charismatic. And here's a lubricious grace note: drawings by François Boucher, slinking in at the Frick.

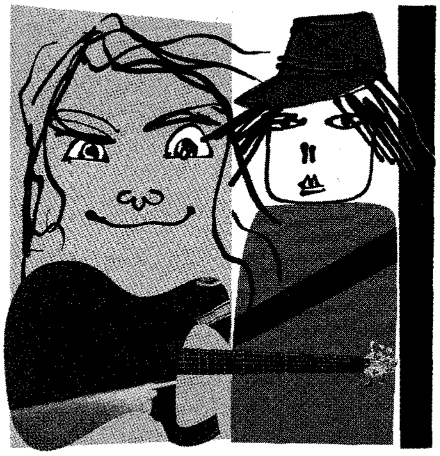
The lately doleful Whitney Museum, suddenly on-message, mounts a must-see retrospective of drawings by Arshile Gorky and a banquet of self-portraiture by Lucas Samaras, as well as the fall's most debated event: a mid-career retrospective of the weirdly Old Masterish, startlingly intelligent painter John Currin, which opens Nov. 20. The Museum of Modern Art, in Queens, bucks the painting trend with "Here Is Elsewhere" (Nov. 7), in which the Lebanese-born, London-based artist Mona Hatoum selects works from the museum's collections. The show may help museumgoers decide whether there's any zip left in Hatoum's nineties-style political festivalism.

Other likely hits this season include ceramic sculpture by the wizardly New Mexican Ken Price, at Matthew Marks, and a pair of weighty photo shows: the first Triennial at the International Center of Photography, keyed to new wrinkles in documentary picture-taking, and "The Dawn of Photography: French Daguerreotypes, 1839-1855," at the Met. The mystically precise daguerreotype medium, revived by Chuck Close last year, is due for a further boost—from Adam Fuss, who will début daguerreotypes of human skulls at Cheim & Reid (Oct. 16).

CLASSICAL MUSIC

Composers new and old provide the focus and fire for the fall season, which in some quarters threatens to verge on the routine. The Met opens with Renée Fleming singing her first Violetta at Lincoln Center (Sept. 29), which should satisfy anyone willing to shell out for an expensive ticket, but the more interesting story lies in the opera's new productions. Halévy's Grand Guignol "La Juive," once hugely popular (Mahler adored it), became operatic poison in the wake of the Holocaust; the Met's first performance of the work since the 1935-36 season, presented in a striking production from the Vienna State Opera beginning Nov. 6, stars the aristocratically elegant Soile Isokoski in the title role and the stentorian Neil Shicoff as her father, Eléazar. "Benvenuto Cellini," which will have its first-ever Met performance on Dec. 4, is an even bigger gamble, a gloriously unwieldy Renaissance opera that will mark the second and final production of the company's Berlioz bicentennial—a farewell blowout before the front office takes the punch bowl away.

Lorin Maazel gets to make his own contribution to the Berlioz stakes on Oct. 2-4 when he leads the Philharmonic in "Roméo et Juliette," continuing a busy schedule at Avery Fisher Hall with a three-week Beethoven Festival (beginning Oct. 21). But if the autumn has an official composer-in-residence it's Stephen Hartke, the respectable Californian who's been hovering on the brink of major success for several years; the Philharmonic offers a world première of a new symphony by him this week, featuring the Hilliard Ensemble, who immediately follow up with the New York première (at Merkin Concert Hall) of "Tituli" and "Cathedral in the Thrashing Rain," two more works that reveal this professorial composer's mystical bent. Miller Theatre once again takes the lead for adventurous programming, offering not only such pianists as Alan Feinberg and Marc-André Hamelin but a series of "Composer Portrait" concerts celebrating the dizzyingly diverse work of Peter Lieberson, Krzysztof Penderecki, Ned Rorem, Harrison Birtwistle, and Lewis Spratlan. The fall season of the Great Performers series will be livened up by the New York première of Osvaldo Golijov's Lorca opera "Ainadamar"—a co-production with BAM, which also presents a return engagement of John Adams's "The Death of Klinghoffer" (an operatic meditation on the theme of terrorism that remains just as provocative today as it was in 1991) and "The New Yorkers," a theatrical event mixing music by the Bang on a Can composers with visual contributions by Ben Katchor, William Wegman, and Bill Morrison and texts by Lou Reed.

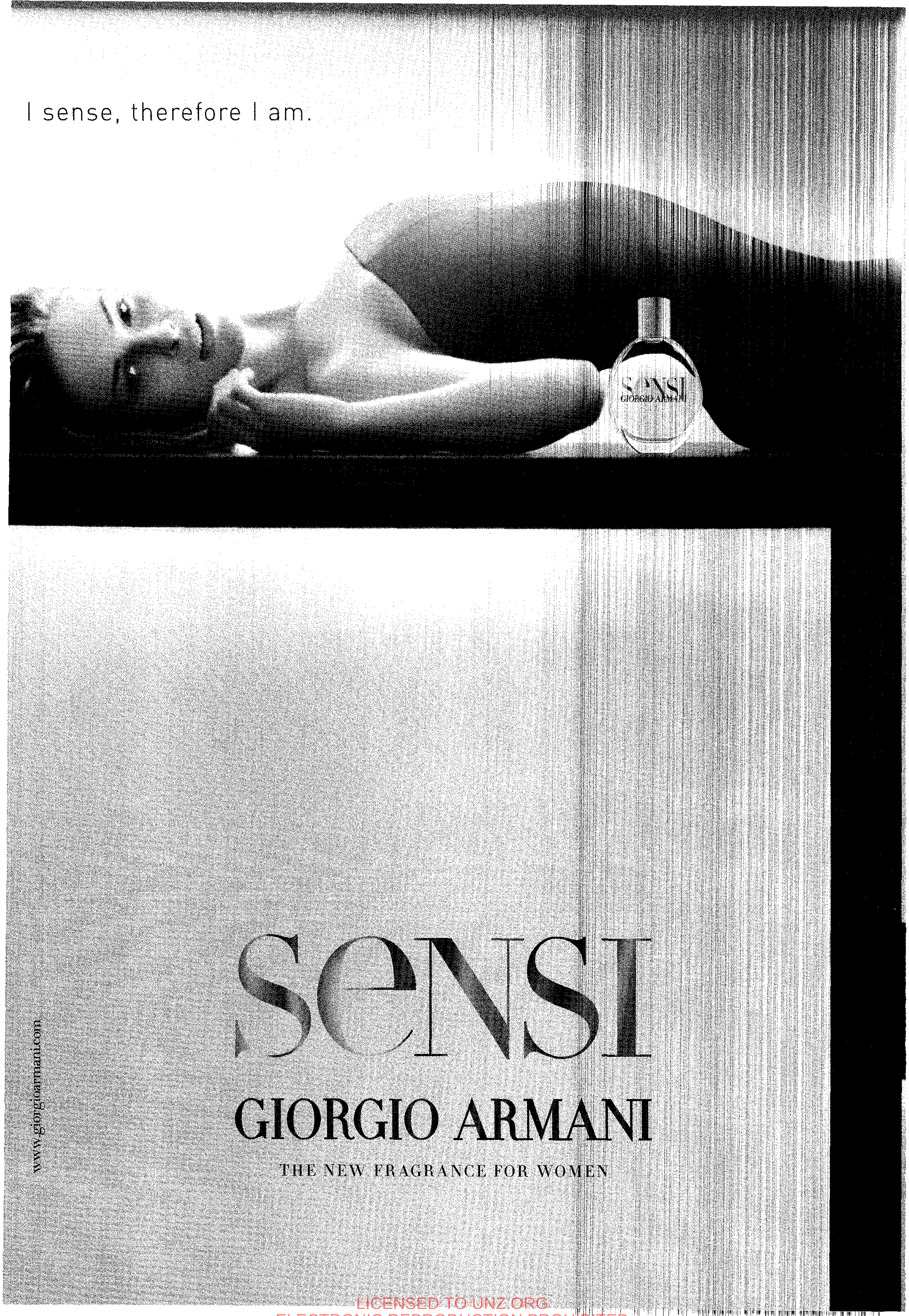


Jack Black in "The School of Rock" and Jack White in "Cold Mountain."

The big news on West Fifty-seventh Street is of course Carnegie's new Zankel Hall, which will be the site of a season-long party that includes not only the kind of artists we'd expect (such as Peter Serkin and Lorraine Hunt Lieberson, in recital on Dec. 13) but also more exotic fare, like the downtown denizen Maya Beiser's solo-cello concert on Oct. 30, "World to Come," and a multimedia film-music program from the Kronos Quartet (Nov. 16). Carnegie Hall proper opens with a concert by the dependably combustible Valery Gergiev and his Kirov Orchestra (Oct. 1), regular visitors to New York, but the Berlin Philharmonic—making its first appearances here since its unforgettable concerts in the days after 9/11—will be even more welcome. The Philharmonic will crown its series of three programs on Nov. 14, with Simon Rattle conducting Schubert, Sibelius, and a new work by Heiner Goebbels, the German composer-producer whose vividly theatrical creations seem ever more indispensable to this stylistically muddled age.

MOVIES

From the bell jar to the box office: Gwyneth Paltrow will play Sylvia Plath in the upcoming "Sylvia" (Oct. 17). But when it comes to the fall movie season, it's best to abide by the words of another poet, Emily Dickinson: "I dwell in Possibility / A fairer House than Prose." And, as usual, the possibilities are infinite. Will Jude Law and Nicole Kidman thaw each other out in Anthony Minghella's "Cold Mountain" (Dec. 25), which also includes the acting début of the rock guitarist and songwriter Jack White? Will Peter Jackson successfully conclude his time in Middle Earth with "The Return of the King" (Dec. 17)? Will "The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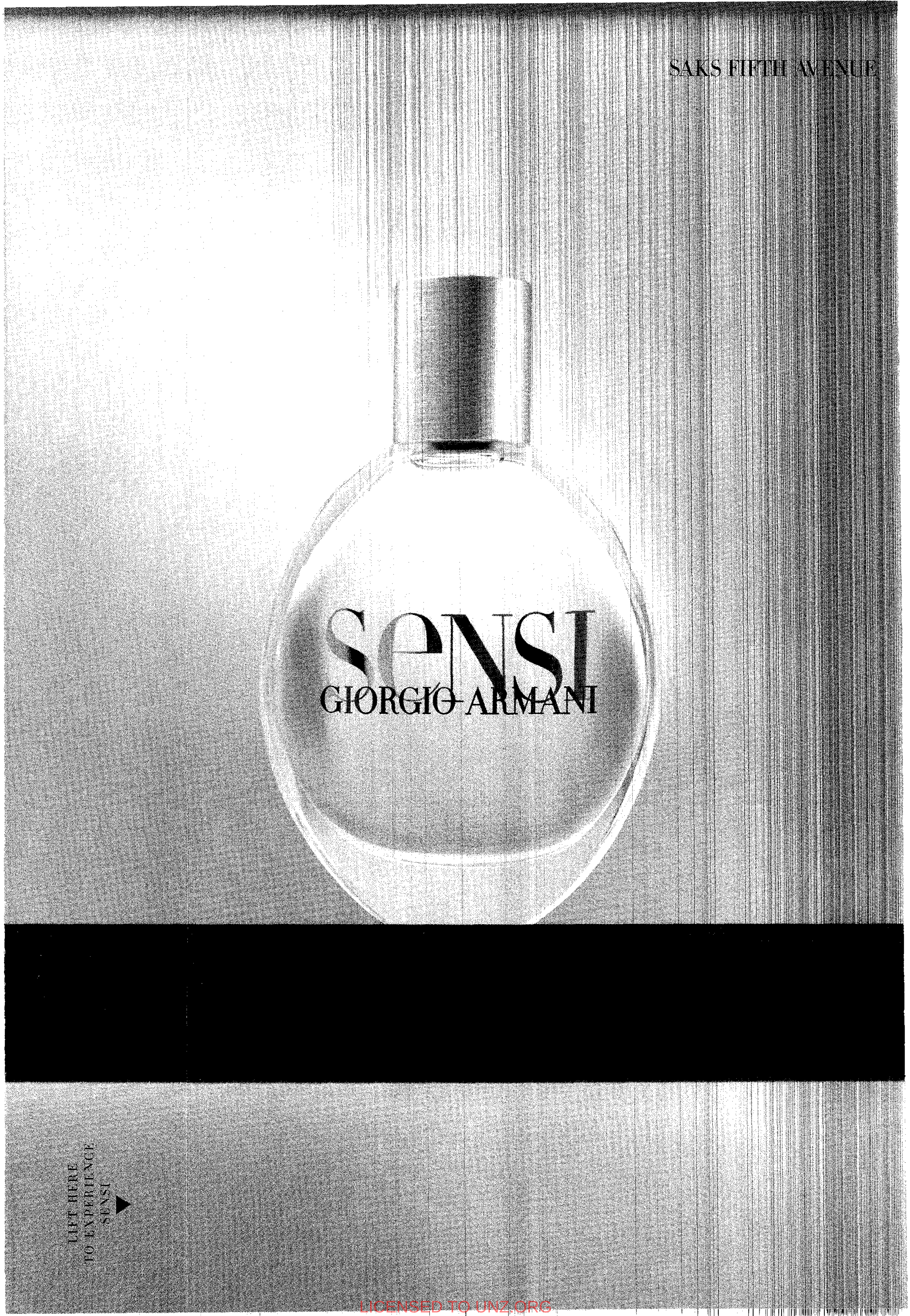
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Matrix Revolutions" (Nov. 5) finally explain the meaning of life, or, for that matter, the meaning of Keanu Reeves?

There are a few facts that aren't in dispute. Quentin Tarantino is back from China, and he's cut his long-awaited fourth film, "Kill Bill," a samurai revenge epic starring Uma Thurman, into two separate parts, the first of which has been given the vintage title "Kill Bill: Volume One" (Oct. 10). Jack Black will make us laugh in Richard Linklater's "The School of Rock" (Oct. 3), in which he plays a substitute teacher who organizes his students into a rock-and-roll force to be reckoned with for a battle-of-the-bands competition. And Patricia Clarkson will have a busy October, as she graces two movies with her gravelly voice: Peter Hedges' directorial début, "Pieces of April" (Oct. 17), in which she tries to reconcile with her rebellious daughter, played by Katie Holmes; and "The Station Agent" (Oct. 10), in which she befriends a reclusive dwarf.

Hayden Christensen, who has spent the last few years playing the young Anakin Skywalker/Darth Vader, portrays a different kind of villain in "Shattered Glass" (Oct. 31), the story of the counterfeit journalist Stephen Glass. Also mixing fact and fiction and courting controversy will be Gus Van Sant's "Elephant" (Oct. 24), which imagines the horror of a Columbine-like shooting and has divided audiences wherever it has been shown. For a more positive image of education, there's "Mona Lisa Smile" (Dec. 19), a period drama in which Julia Roberts teaches a group of nineteen-fifties Wellesley girls that there's more to life than marrying a nice boy from Harvard. And even this year's documentaries have a scholastic bent: Nicolas Philibert's "To Be and To Have" (Sept. 19) chronicles a year in the life of a one-room schoolhouse in rural France.

For fans of sturdy, reticent Hollywood productions with broad, strong acting and screenwriting, try Clint Eastwood's "Mystic River" (Oct. 8): in the film, which opens the New York Film Festival, Eastwood and his powerhouse cast of Sean Penn, Tim Robbins, and Kevin Bacon will bring Dennis Lehane's novel about working-class Boston friends to the screen. In a similar vein, Ron Howard, who appeared in John Wayne's very last Western, directs his own oater, "The Missing" (Nov. 19), which places a woman (Cate Blanchett) at the center of its frontier-justice story. And the Australian director Peter Weir revives the seafaring epic with "Master and Commander" (Nov. 14), based on the Patrick O'Brian novels. Russell Crowe plays the hero, Lucky Jack Aubrey; the devoted readers of the series (imagine nautical Trekkies) expect him to weigh in at seventeen stone.

The Coen brothers return with the season's most anticipated star pairing: George Clooney and Catherine Zeta-Jones in "Intolerable Cruelty" (Oct. 10). The two match wits in divorce court, but expect a few scenes to be stolen by the gifted ham Cedric the Entertainer. As for other dynamic duos, Ben Stiller and Drew Barrymore look like they're having fun in the trailer for "Duplex" (Sept. 26), which finds them playing a young couple trapped in a quintessential New York circumstance: coveting the apartment of the old lady who lives above them. Nancy Meyers' new movie, "Something's Gotta Give" (Dec. 12), sends Jack Nicholson into uncharted territory: the pursuit of an age-appropriate mate. He plays a record executive who falls for the playwright mother (Diane Keaton) of his new girlfriend (Amanda Peet). Lucky Jack indeed.

As the end of the year approaches, movies start to show their holiday spirit and their Oscar dreams. The documentarian Errol Morris hopes to garner laurels with "The Fog of War" (Dec. 26), a portrait of the cerebral Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara and a trenchant look at the ever-relevant decision of when and where to send U.S. troops into battle. For a restorative dose of Yuletide cheer, we suggest "Elf" (Nov. 7), with Will Ferrell as a human raised to believe that he's one of Santa's wee helpers, and Terry Zwigoff's "Bad Santa" (Nov. 26), which co-stars Billy Bob Thornton and Bernie Mac as department-store Santas bent on pulling off a Grinch-like robbery. Finally, if you miss out on tickets for "The Nutcracker" this year, see Robert Altman's "The Company" (Dec. 25), in which he brings his fluid camerawork to the world of dance, filming a drama with Neve Campbell and Chicago's Joffrey Ballet.

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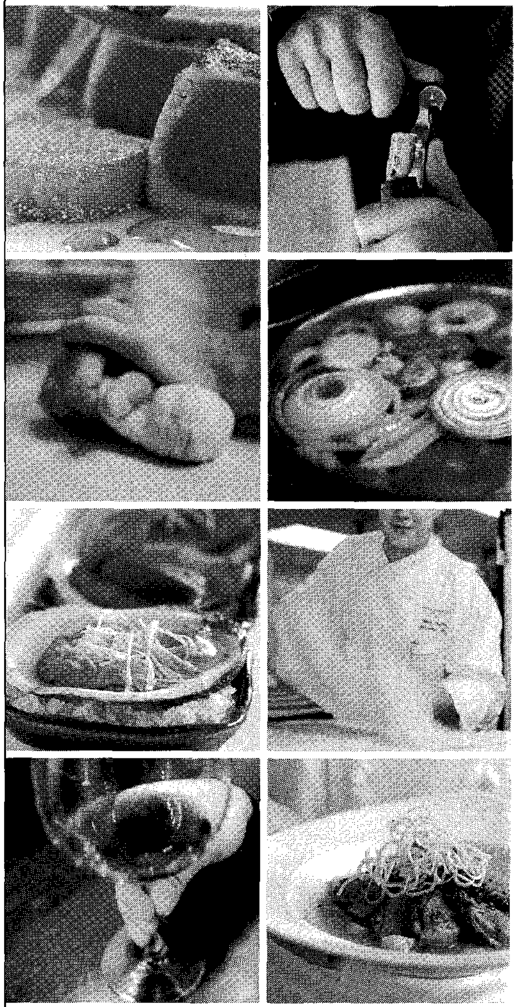

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BECKETT/ALBEE
Marian Seldes and Brian Murray perform an evening of one-act plays by Samuel Beckett and Edward Albee (a combination not seen on the New York stage since 1960), including Beckett's "Not I," "Footfalls," and "A Piece of Monologue" and Albee's "Counting the Ways." Lawrence Sacharow directs. Previews begin Sept. 23. (Century Center, 111 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.)

BOLD GIRLS
The 29th Street Rep presents a play by Rona Munro about four women making the best of things in violence-ridden modern-day Belfast. Directed by Ludovica Villar-Hauser. Opens Sept. 18 at 8. (212 W. 29th St. 212-868-4444.)

THE BOY FROM OZ
The movie star Hugh Jackman stars in a new musical about the life and times of the Australian pop star Peter Allen, in which Stephanie Block plays Liza Minnelli and Beth Fowler plays Allen's mother. Directed by Philip Wm. McKinley and choreographed by Joey McKneely, with a book by Martin Sherman ("Bent") and music and lyrics by Allen and others. In previews. (Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

Headlong Dance presents "Britney's Inferno," at Dance Theatre Workshop.

JOHN RITTER

CELLOPHANE
Mac Wellman turns his ironic scrutiny on the spiritual history of America, describing the country's moral complexion through fractured, poetic speech. Directed by Jim Simpson. One preview on Sept. 17. Opens Sept. 18 at 8. (Flea, 41 White St. 212-226-2407.)

GOOD MORNING, BILL
Keen Company presents the New York première of a 1927 romantic comedy by P. G. Wodehouse that does not involve Jeeves. Directed by Carl Forsman. In previews. (Connelly, 220 E. 4th St. 212-868-4444.)

THE HARLEQUIN STUDIES
The Signature Theatre Company kicks off its year-long Bill Irwin festival with a play that uses acrobatics and live music to explore the many sides of the commedia-dell'arte character. The playwright leads the cast and also directs. With original music by Doug Skinner, sets by Doug Stein, costumes by Catherine Zuber, and lights by James Vermeulen. In previews. Opens Sept. 21 at 8. (Peter Norton Space, 555 W. 42nd St. 212-244-7529.)

LITTLE SHOP OF HORRORS
The musical about a bloodthirsty extraterrestrial plant and the wimpy florist who becomes its slave gets a Broadway revival. Directed by Jerry Zaks. In previews. (Virginia, 245 W. 52nd St. 212-239-6200.)

LIVING OUT
Second Stage begins its twenty-fifth season with the New York première of a play by Lisa Loomer about a Los Angeles couple who get embroiled in nanny troubles, starring Kathryn Meisle as the Anglo mother and Zilah Mendoza as the El Salvadoran nanny. Directed by Jo Bonney. In previews. (307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

THE NIGHT HERON
Chris Bauer stars in a new play by Jez Butterworth about two best friends who invite a mysterious boarder to live with them in their ramshackle house on the edge of the Fens. Directed by Neil Pepe. Previews begin Sept. 17. (Atlantic, 336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200.)

OMNIUM GATHERUM
Theresa Rebeck and Alexandra Gersten-Vassilaros bring their critically acclaimed dinner-party-à-clef play to New York from Louisville, where it had its première last spring. Kristine Nielsen leads a cast of "celebrity" guests, playing their hostess—a woman who has a famous cooking show and heads a commercial home-design empire. Directed by Will Frears. In previews. (Variety Arts, 110 Third Ave. 212-239-6200.)

RECENT TRAGIC EVENTS
Playwrights Horizons begins its season with a new play by Craig Wright that stars Heather Graham, in her New York stage début, as a Midwestern ad exec who goes through with a blind date the day after 9/11. With Kalimi A. Baxter, Hamish Linklater, Jesse J. Perez, and Colleen Werthmann. Directed by Michael John Garcés. In previews. (416 W. 42nd St. 212-279-4200.)

A ROOSTER IN THE HENHOUSE
A one-man play written by and starring John O'Hern tackles the subject of stay-at-home dads. Directed by Mark S. Graham. In previews. Opens Sept. 21 at 7. (Lion, 412 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

ROUNDING THIRD
John Rando directs a new comedy by Richard Dresser about two warring Little League coaches with drastically different ideas about winning, losing, and how to play the game. In previews. (John Houseman, 450 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.)

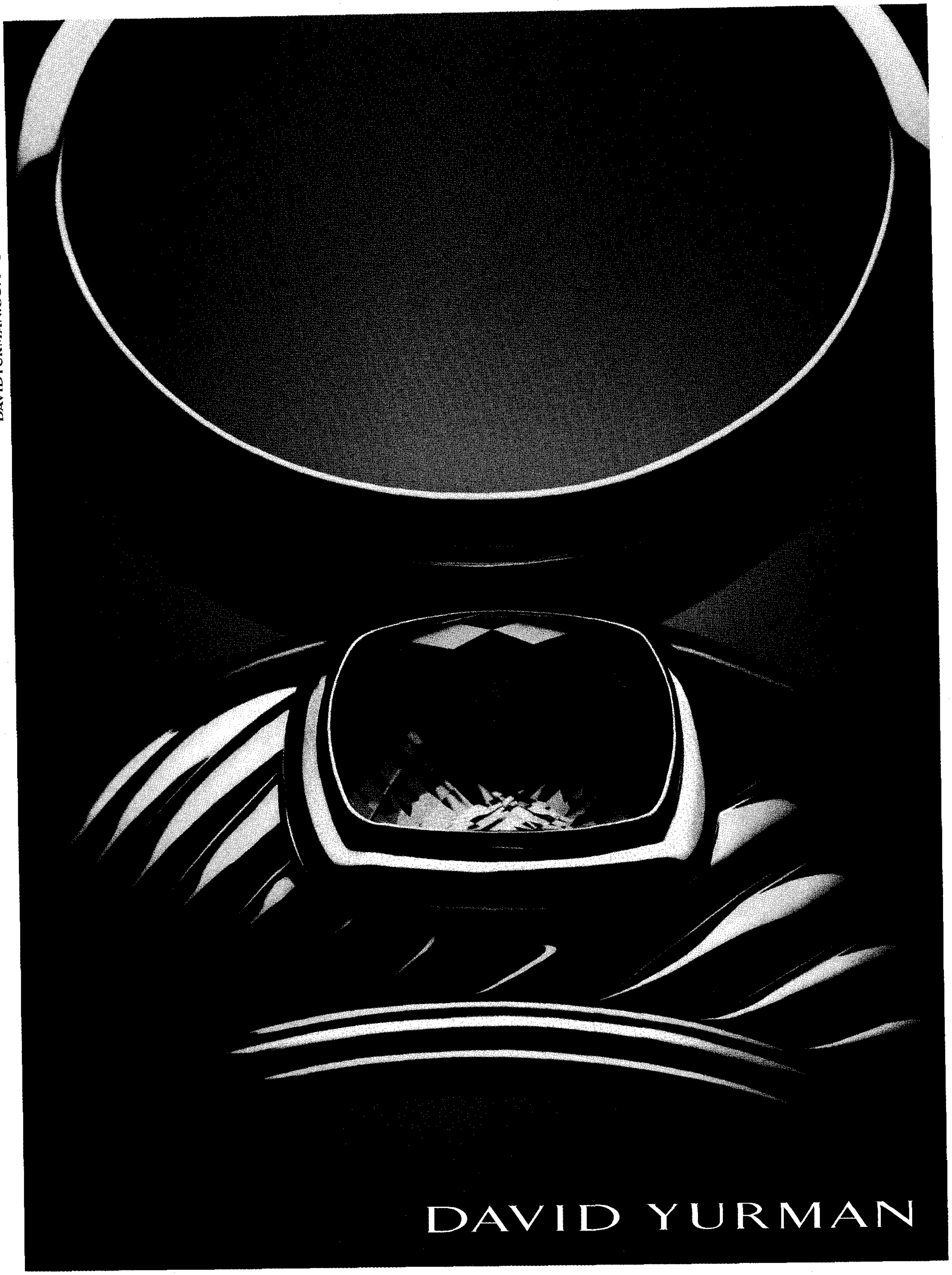
OPENED RECENTLY

ANNA BELLA EEMA
Lisa D'Amour weaves werewolves and disembodied voices into her musical ghost story about a mother and daughter who have been evicted from their trailer, directed by Katie Pearl. One of two new productions by the New Georges company, it runs in repertory with "Belly: Three Shorts," written and composed by Alva Rogers and directed by Julia Whitworth. (HERE, 145 Sixth Ave., near Spring St. 212-447-8423. Closes Oct. 4.)

AVENUE Q
This musical puppet-and-people show has much to recommend it: an exceptionally gifted cast, a strong book by Jeff Whitty, equally strong music and lyrics by Robert Lopez and Jeff Marx, and the splendid direction of Jason Moore. Humans act alongside cloth co-stars—such as Princeton, a bright-eyed college grad, and two girls who want to date him, a kindergarten teacher's aide named Kate Monster and a lounge singer called Lucy T. Slut (both performed by the great Stephanie D'Abruzzo). Is it possible to be attracted to a puppet? D'Abruzzo gives Lucy so much verve that when she saunters offstage in D'Abruzzo's hand—all the puppets are handheld—you want to follow her with wolf whistles. (Reviewed in our issue of 8/11/03.) (Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200.)

BERKSHIRE VILLAGE IDIOT
On the sparest of sets—a barrel with water in it, some auto-supply-shop tires, and a fish tank—and with only himself as the cast, Michael Isaac Connor conjures a whole community of macho men, scrappy kids, and sad wives in a small Massachusetts town. Friends and relations ripple out from the central, stony relationship between a vulnerable boy and his emotionally remote father—a man who went to war to avoid the (for him) more agonizing duties of being an on-call father and husband. With his quick, nervous movements, shy muscularity, intense gaze, and excellent gift for mimicry, Connor creates a working-class "Ice Storm": a work whose emotional impact sinks in slowly and lingers. Directed by Barry Edelstein. (Zipper, 336 W. 37th St. 212-239-6200.)

BOOBS! THE MUSICAL
Ruth Wallis's cabaret songs may have been considered too raunchy for radio in the Eisenhower era, but today her goofily louche double entendres ("Johnny's Got a Yo-Yo," "Drill 'Em All") seem practically wholesome. In a theatrical performance of twenty of Wallis's hits, produced by Lawrence Leritz, and co-produced by Michael Whaley, who wrote the show with Steve Mackes, the humor and observational powers of Wallis's lyrics can now be fully savored. Six talented actors sing the songs in a high-spirited revue, fleshing out their story lines. Particularly memorable is Rebecca Young, who, in one skit, licks a huge lollipop, dresses in a hyper-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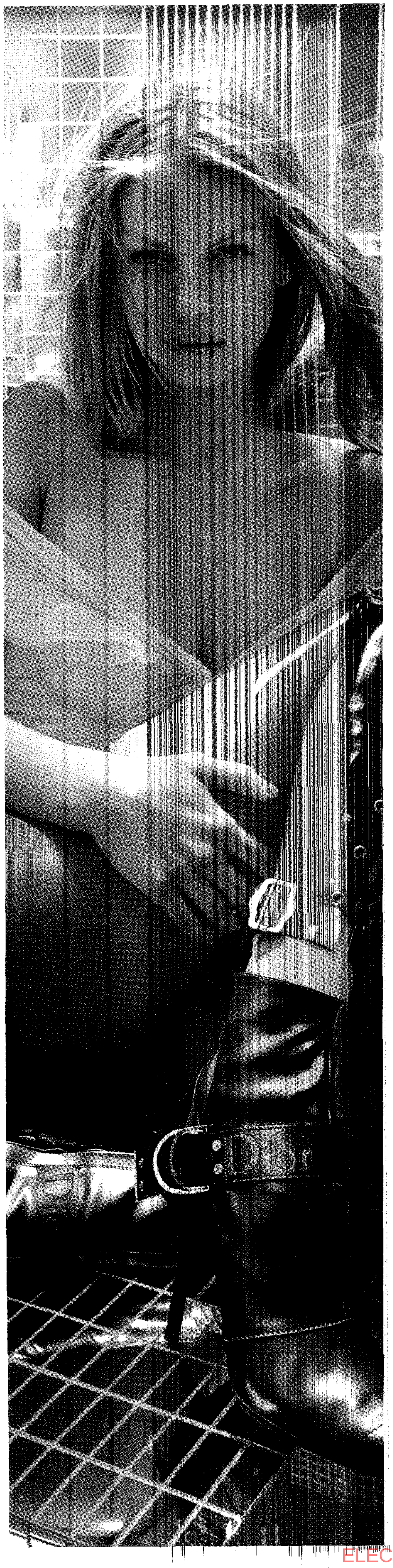
MADISON AT 64TH SOUTH COAST PLAZA



ruffled Little Bo Peep costume, and sings a sugar-crazed rendition of a song about a sailor, Davey, and his superlative dinghy. Directed by Donna Drake. (Triad, 158 W. 72nd St. 212-239-6200.)

CARNIVAL KNOWLEDGE
Todd Robbins, a light-bulb-eating carnival impresario and the dean of Brooklyn's Coney Island Sideshow School, is one of the last purveyors of the tradition of the American freak show. Here, he teams up with a hirsute dancing dwarf named Little Jimmy, Twistina the Rubber Lady, the Flying Ebola Brothers, and a handful of other freaks and geeks to bring the magic of the midway to a wider audience and to open the curtain on its secrets. Robbins even draws spectators into the act, although he doesn't encourage them to follow his example and hammer nails into their nostrils. (SoHo Playhouse, 15 Vandam St. 212-239-6200.)

CHOCOLATE IN HEAT: GROWING UP ARAB IN AMERICA
The young Palestinian-American playwright Betty Shamieh and the actor Piter Fattouche portray the experiences of young Arab-Americans and their friends and enemies in five funny and poetic monologues, building a cast of characters that includes college girls, a Jordanian prince, a shrewd Latina prostitute (well played by the versatile Fattouche), and an illiterate high-school dance coach given to such inscrutable aphorisms as "You got to learn to fly before you learn to slither." Shamieh and Fattouche shed less light on the situation of Arab-Americans in particular than they do on the broader indignity of the immigrant experience. In "Justice," the nuanced final piece, a Palestinian girl in Spanish Harlem visits a bodega whose owner lusts after her mother. When the owner offers the little girl a free chocolate, her mother seizes the girl's wrist as she reaches for it. "You have to pay for everything eventually," she tells her. Directed by Sam Gold. (The Tank, 432 W. 42nd St. 212-868-4444. Closes Sept. 27.)

EDGE
In a troubling and powerful performance, Angelica Torn plays the poet Sylvia Plath on the day she ended her life—a day that finds her preoccupied by dark memories of her father and of her husband, the poet Ted Hughes. The play, written and directed by Paul Alexander, is based on his book about the poet, "Rough Magic." Torn lets us see what the script does not—the extent to which Plath, who believed that she didn't exist unless she was being subjugated by a man, manufactured her own downfall. (8/11/03) (DR2 Theatre, 103 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200. Closes Sept. 20.)

FLOW
Will Power meshes the concrete poetics of the old school with the freestyle charge of the new in his solo portrayal of an urban neighborhood where storytelling, in the griot tradition, is the only thing that can't be killed off. Directed by Danny Hoch. (New York Theatre Workshop, 79 E. 4th St. 212-239-6200.)

A LIE OF THE MIND
White Horse Theatre Company revives Sam Shepherd's 1985 play about two families linked by domestic abuse. Directed by Cyndy Marion. (Sargent, 314 W. 54th St. 212-868-4444. Closes Sept. 28.)

THE LOVE-HUNGRY FARMER
Des Keogh stars in a poignant quasi-comedy about a bachelor farmer's efforts to find himself a wife, which he adapted from the stories of the Irish writer John B. Keane. Directed by Charlotte Moore. (Irish Repertory Theatre, 132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737. Closes Sept. 28.)

MATT & BEN
This is one not to miss. In addition to being short—just over an hour—it's goofy, funny, and improbably believable. In captivating performances, Mindy Kaling (a compact Indian-American woman in a tracksuit) and Brenda Withers (a lanky Wasp in khakis and a rumpled button-down) play Ben (Affleck) and Matt (Damon), best friends from the Cambridge Rindge & Latin School, who are holed up in 1997 in a filthy apartment, squabbling as they try to write a script. When the complete screenplay to "Good Will Hunting" literally drops from the ceiling, they are both floored and their friendship is tested. Kaling and Withers have created one of the most appealing male-bonding stories since Damon and Pythias, or Oscar and Felix. And within minutes you don't even notice that they're not male. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 212-477-5288.)

NAMEDROPPING
David Rothenberg's one-man show about his fifty years in the theatre is more of a loose, charming evening of conversation than a structured production, which makes his tales of working with Bette Davis and Elizabeth Taylor (among many other stars) all the more delightfully intimate. In addition to the dish, Rothenberg serves up anecdotes about how, every once in a while, a well-dropped name can change a person's life—imparting them on the sly, without weighing the evening down. (Mint, 311 W. 43rd St. 212-315-0231.)

THE NUCLEAR FAMILY
This high-spirited downtown show is basically an improv act in which three men juggle family roles and wigs, accompanied by a pianist who uses wisecracking arpeggio flourishes and pop-music samples to underscore comic bits as they evanesce. The result of their frenzied collaboration feels like an episode of "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy" in which the straight guy never shows up and the fab hosts do makeovers on each other instead. Jimmy Bennett, John Gregorio, and Stephan Guarino star; Matt Cohen mans the piano. (Zipper's Belt Theatre, 336 W. 37th St. 212-239-6200.)

TABLES FOR TWO

MONTRACHET
293 West Broadway (212-219-2777)—Montrachet, a sure thing on any short list of New York's most romantic restaurants, opened in April, 1985. Seven weeks later, it received a three-star review from the *Times*, and the crowds headed down to its then-ungentrified Tribeca location. A hefty percentage got lost. "It was like Lamaze," Tracy Nieporent, a partner in the venture with his brother Drew, remembers. "People walked in and you could see they were under duress. It was our job to soothe them." The storefront hideaway, which set the standard for a generation of unpretentious American takes on French cuisine, led to a restaurant empire (the Myriad Restaurant Group, which owns eight places in three cities and counting) that left the brothers little time to tinker with the peculiar low-key attractions of the original.

This benign neglect—or the artful illusion of it—has inspired loyalty in both patrons and staff. The art on the walls, a moody modern grab bag that includes one Frankenthaler and three Sean Scullys, came from artists and dealers who work in the neighborhood and visit frequently. And the chef, Chris Gesualdi, is back for his second tour of duty after an absence of almost four years. He presents the menu's perennials with piquant details—the roast squab with quail egg, the truffle-crusted salmon with oyster mushrooms, the braised short ribs with roasted parsnips—matching distinct flavors in subtle proportion.

The food eventually must share the stage with the wine, which is also presented in a relaxed style. In fact, the owners have turned tasting into a game. In "What's My Wine?" guests can lower the price of a mystery bottle (chosen by the staff) every time they name one of the wine's six characteristics: country, region, village, grape varietal, producer, and vintage. Nobody's guessed all six. When one diner, already drinking a delicious Bouchard Côtes de Nuits chosen by the sommelier, raised doubts that the place had any bottles from the year she was born (back in the sixties), the maitre d', Bruce Yung, said, "Oh, we've had wines from the eighteen-nineties!" (Open Mondays through Saturdays for dinner and Fridays for lunch. Entrées $26-$29.)

—Kevin Conley

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PLAYING BURTON
The Irish Repertory Theatre presents a one-man show about the Welsh actor Richard Burton, written and directed by one of his countrymen, Mark Jenkins, and performed by the Burton look-alike Brian Mallon. (132 W. 22nd St. 212-727-2737. Closes Sept. 28.)

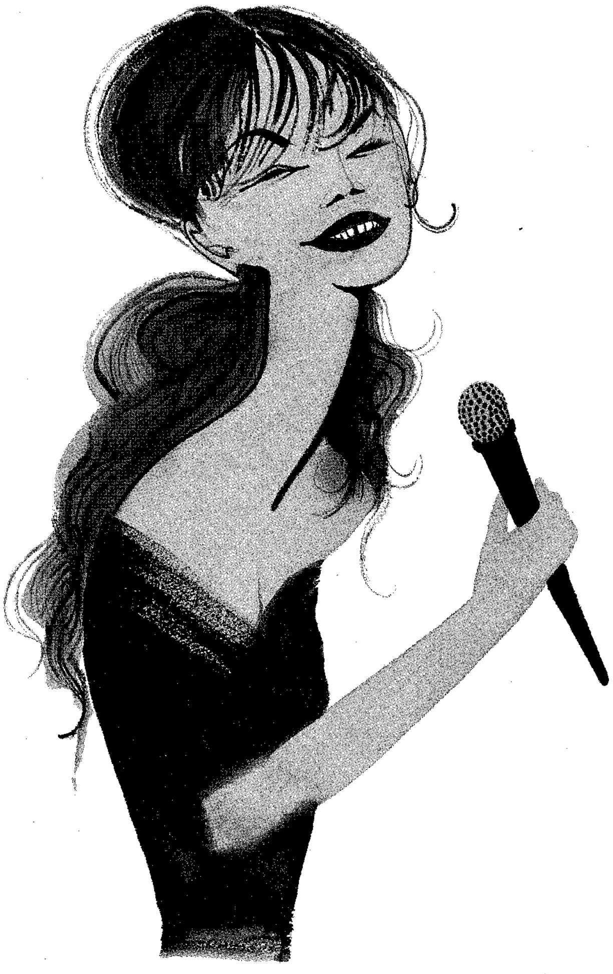
THE THING ABOUT MEN
Doris Dörrie's ruefully resigned comedy of modern immorality, "Men," has become an uproarious musical—with exuberant songs about workaholism, betrayal, and compromise, performed by a cast with nimble comic timing. When the cheating ad man Tom (Marc Kudisch, who nails the "lovable jerk" character and also has a great baritone) finds out that his wife (Leah Hocking) is having an affair, he hunts down her lover, Sebastian (the dreamy tenor Ron Bohmer), and moves in with him (incognito). Jimmy Roberts' music buoyantly carries Joe DiPietro's excellent book and lyrics, and some of the best tunes ("Highway of Your Heart," "Me, Too") go to the mischievous Daniel Reichard and Jennifer Simard, who perform multiple caricature roles. The back wall of Richard Hoover's set is inlaid with concealed windows that slide open to reveal scene-setting video images. As the projections change, the stage morphs into a suburban living room, a scuzzy artist's loft, a dive bar, or an office. Like the set, the show flashes enough reality at the audience to keep things plausible, enough fantasy to keep things frisky. Directed by Mark Clements, with musical staging by Rob Ashford. (Promenade, Broadway at 76th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE THREEPENNY OPERA
Brecht's spinoff of Gay's "Beggar's Opera," first performed in Berlin in 1928, sharply satirizes the bourgeois capitalists of the Weimar Republic. Back then, it packed a political punch, but modern audiences go for its lusty lowlife sheen and its macabre Weill score—which has been kept fresh by Lotte Lenya's unforgettable performance as Pirate Jenny in the Pabst film of the play. In a neatly executed but not spectacular new production at the Jean Cocteau Rep, the director, David Fuller, stresses the beggarliness of the characters; the poor beg to become beggars, a bride begs to be loved, and even Mack the Knife (played by Chad A. Suitts), who should be stealing sympathies, constantly solicits them instead. (Bouwerie Lane Theatre, 330 Bowery, at Bond St. 212-677-0060.)

TRUMBO
From the sound of it, Dalton Trumbo—the screenwriter for such movies as "Spartacus" and "Roman Holiday"—must have been one of the most divine dinner companions ever to grace God's green earth. He smoked. He was, when he wasn't typing in the bathtub (his preferred workplace), a natty dresser. He was both a sentimentalist and a snob, with more than a touch of the poet. ("I'm perfectly willing to go anywhere that I can live not, perhaps, in peace, but certainly in luxury," he once wrote to a friend.) But in 1947, the House Un-American Activities Committee accused him of Communist leanings, and during the next thirteen years he was banned from working in his chosen field. In his son Christopher Trumbo's moving and evocative stage portrait of his father, based on letters Trumbo wrote to his family, friends, and enemies, a rotating roster of stars (Nathan Lane until Sept. 21) takes the lead role, reading Trumbo's letters, and Gordon MacDonald plays Christopher, providing the narration that binds them together. Directed by Peter Askin. (9/15/03) (Westside, 407 W. 43rd St. 212-239-6200.)

WHAT EVER:
AN AMERICAN ODYSSEY IN EIGHT ACTS
The California actress and performance artist Heather Woodbury brings her dazzling, sprawling spoken-word journey through the American Zeitgeist to the East Village. Her ability to convey belligerent drug-raddled prostitutes, aged sensual sculptors, ditzy, poetry-spouting Seattle rave kids, evil television moderators, and brokenhearted corporate dads through her voice, body movement, and facial contortions is unearthly. The show is performed sequentially in eight performances divided among four consecutive evenings. Audiences are encouraged to see one, some, or all segments. Those who are unable to catch the whole thing can read the book, which Farrar, Straus & Giroux has just published as a work of fiction—but that would mean missing out on her astonishing performance. Through Sept. 21. Directed by Dudley Saunders. (P.S. 122, 150 First Ave., at 9th St. 212-477-5288.)

WHAT'S YOUR KARMA?
In a spooky, sandalwood-scented evening of past-lives performance art, the English clairvoyant Lilith Dove takes the measure of the psychic auras of assorted audience participants, delivers a rapid torrent of preternaturally specific details on the ground their souls covered in preceding centuries, then advises them how to conduct their present lives to pick up the thread of the past. At one recent performance, audience members were said to include two prior residents of the lost continent of Atlantis, a courtesan from fifteenth-century France, a witness to a crucifixion in the time of Christ, and a plantation slave. (Producers Club, 358 W. 44th St. 212-352-3101.)


Jane Birkin, at Florence Gould Hall (see Night Life).

RUBEN TOLEDO

LONG RUNS

AIDA
Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-307-4747.

BEAUTY AND THE BEAST
Lunt-Fontanne, 205 W. 46th St. 212-307-4747.

BIG RIVER
American Airlines, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300. (Closes Sept. 21.)

BLUE MAN GROUP
Astor Place Theatre, 434 Lafayette St. 212-254-4370.

CABARET
Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-239-6200.

CHICAGO
Ambassador, 215 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.

DE LA GUARDA
Daryl Roth, 20 Union Sq. E., at 15th St. 212-239-6200.

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY
20TH ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATION
Douglas Fairbanks, 432 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200.

42ND STREET
Ford Center, 213 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.

NINE
Eugene O'Neill, 230 W. 49th St. 212-239-6200.

GYPSY
Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

HAIRSPRAY
Neil Simon, 250 W. 52nd St. 212-307-4100.

KIKI AND HERB: COUP DE THÉÂTRE
Cherry Lane, 38 Commerce St., between Bedford and Hudson Sts. 212-239-6200.

THE LION KING
New Amsterdam, 214 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100.

MAMMA MIA!
Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-563-5544.

MOVIN' OUT
Richard Rodgers, 226 W. 46th St. 212-307-4100.

THE PHANTOM OF THE OPERA
Majestic, 245 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

THE PRODUCERS
St. James, 246 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200.

RENT
Nederlander, 208 W. 41st St. 212-921-8000.

STOMP
Orpheum, 126 Second Ave., at 8th St. 212-477-2477.

TAKE ME OUT
Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200.

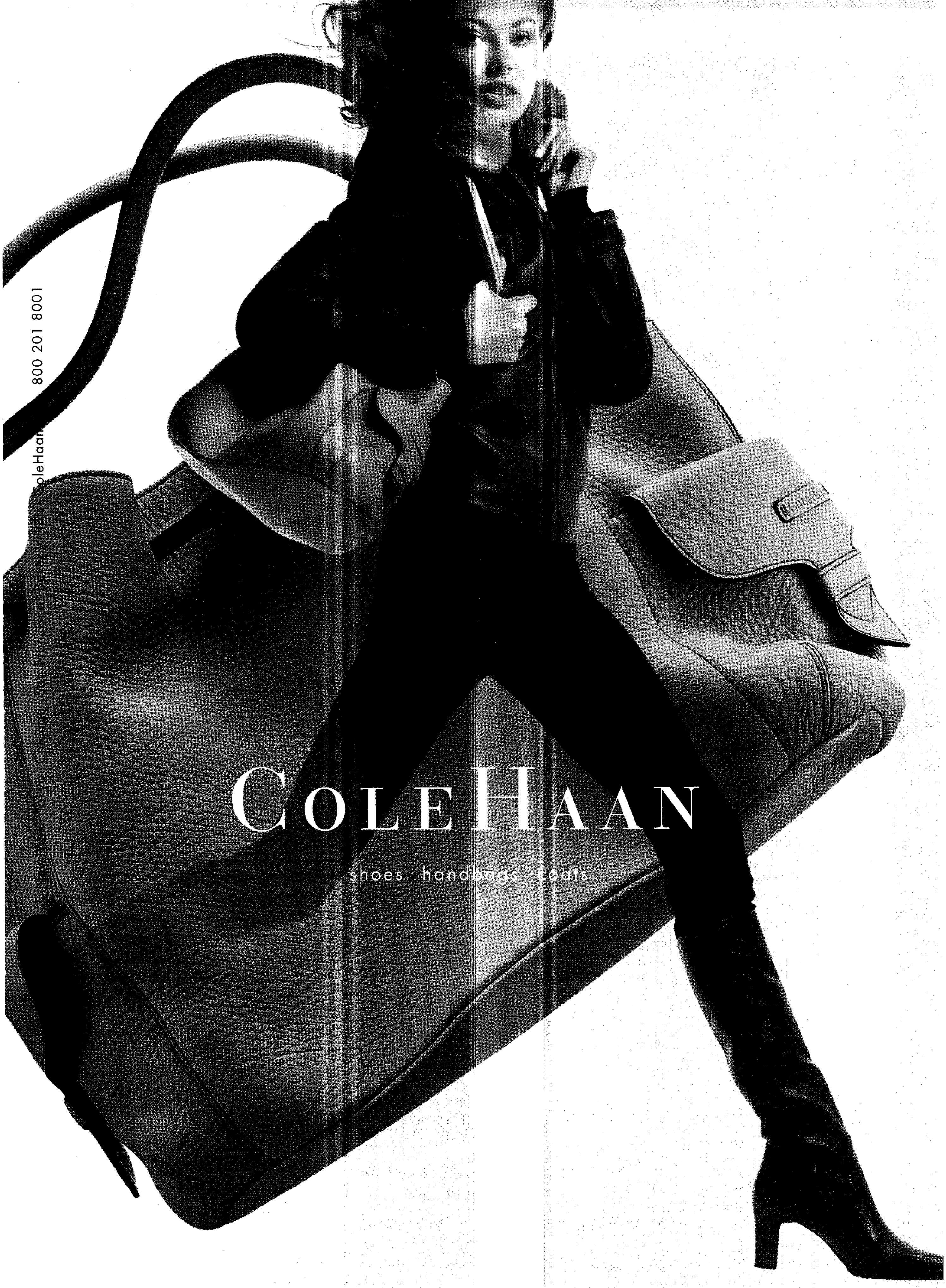
THOROUGHLY MODERN MILLIE
Marquis, Broadway at 45th St. 212-307-4100.

URINETOWN
Henry Miller, 124 W. 43rd St. 212-239-6200.

DANCE

"THE PHANTOM PROJECT—
TWENTIETH ANNIVERSARY SEASON"
Before there was the Bill T. Jones/Arnie Zane Dance Company, there were simply Bill T. Jones and Arnie Zane, two promising young dancers who were also life partners. Now celebrating its twentieth season, the company revisits its roots by presenting many of Jones and Zane's signature works with new dancers working in new combinations. (The Kitchen, 512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793, ext. 11. Sept. 17-20 at 8.)

MOMIX
Moses Pendleton, also known as Mo, brings his magic mix to the Joyce for three weeks, opening the season. Critics may yawn, but crowds go wild over the trance-like, humorous, and erotic illusions of Pendleton's corps; indeed, the company is one of the few thriving for-profit dance companies in the U.S. The season includes several evening-length pieces, all of them repertory, and each structured as a series of vignettes on a theme. In the popular 1994 piece "Baseball," whose tenth anniversary is being marked this year by a countrywide tour, dancers pay tribute to the national pastime as they move to music by James Brown, Queen, Ali Farka Toure, and others; in the nineteen-part des-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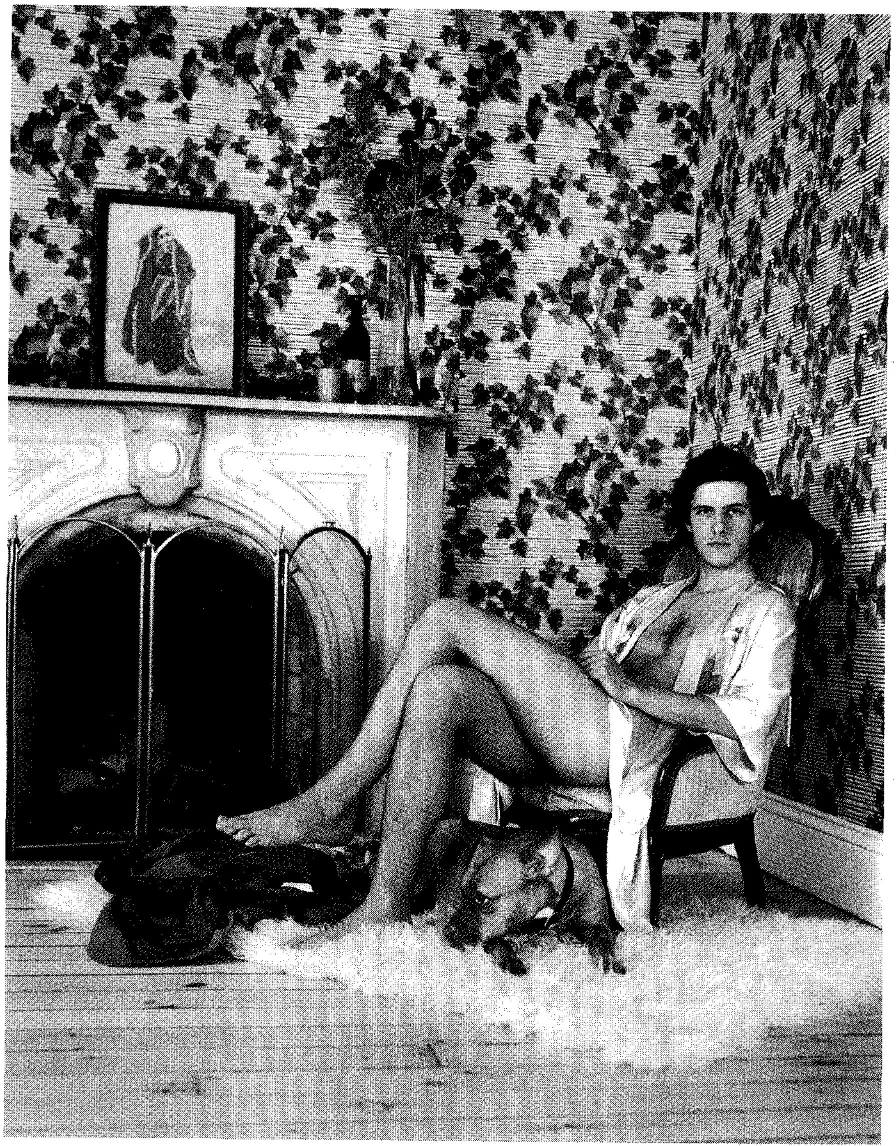


"Van," by Katy Grannan, at Salon 94 (see Photography).

ert saga "Opus Cactus," a mostly New Age score accompanies dancers who imitate blooming saguaro cacti, birds, and a gila monster; and in "Passion," Peter Gabriel's sensual score for the film "The Last Temptation of Christ" provides a musical backdrop to the dance as a video montage that ranges from Chinese tombs to childbirth to Renaissance paintings flashes across a scrim. (Eighth Ave. at 19th St. 212-242-0800. Sept. 23 at 8. Through Oct. 12.)

IMPERIAL ACROBATS OF CHINA
For the first time in its forty-five-year history, China's première group of leaping, rubber-limbed acrobats comes to New York, standard-bearers of a court tradition that dates back two thousand years. Forming a kaleidoscope of colors in their circusy costumes, the group performs feats of balance, speed, and precise ensemble interplay, presenting "Terracotta Soldiers" (inspired by the well-known tomb figures), "The Blissful Soul," "Lotus Blossom," and other works. The visit is part of their cross-country U.S.A. Friendship Tour. Choreographed by Wang Xiao, Chen Dan Feng, and Yang Jun. (Madison Square Garden. 212-239-6200. Sept. 18-19 and Sept. 21-23 at 7:30 and Sept. 20 at 2 and 7. Through Sept. 24.)

"BRITNEY'S INFERNO"
The fiendishly inventive Philly dance troupe Headlong Dance Theatre adds to the pop star's current trials with an evening-length dance-theatre piece that elevates the saga of the rise, and putative fall, of Britney Spears to myth. On a stage lit by concert Techno-beams, a Mephistophelean stalker moderates as Christy Lee (as Spears) enters the scene, wearing low-rise hip-huggers. As Britney struts and kicks down a catwalk that doubles as the River Styx, a chorus of bodysuited maenads throng her worshipfully and crown her with an MTV-ready blond mane—made of long yellow plastic strips, it looks like a cheerleader's pompom. But their adulation soon turns to hatred, and Britney becomes a victim of her expired popularity. Meant, perhaps, as a meditation on fame, the piece comes across as a bizarre sequel to "Revenge of the Nerds" as if performed by the cast of Fellini's "Satyricon." (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. Sept. 17-20 at 7.)

"AFTER THE FALL"
Everyone feels sorry for Icarus—but who worries about Daedalus, stuck with the guilt of having made the defective wings? The answer: Jamie Jewett and Aaron Henderson, whose multimedia dance-theatre group Lostwax has created an evening that uses dance, song, spoken word, video and a "movement chorus" (in the classical tradition) to explore the fate of the man who thought up the Minotaur's labyrinth, Theseus's thread-escape strategy, and Icarus's wings—and was punished for his ingenuity. Lostwax, with a cast of six, transposes the drama to a modern context. "Daedalus becomes kind of this homeless person, who is brought back into reality by Ariadne," Jewett explains. With a percussive score by Timothy Quigley. (Danspace at St. Mark's Church-in-the-Bouwerie, Second Ave. at 10th St. 212-674-8194. Sept. 18-21 at 8:30.)

CORNFIELD DANCE
The choreographer Ellen Cornfield visits the Merce Cunningham studio with the New York premières of "Thread" (a dance inspired by the DNA strand) and "Twoply" and the repertory piece "Velcro Road," a quintet that explores color and the human voice. (55 Bethune St. 212-924-0077. Sept. 19 at 9 and Sept. 20-21 at 8:30.)

"(NOB)ODYSSEY'S"
M.I.T. and the Fulbright program are both backers of this dance-theatre installation, a reinvestigation of Odysseus's journey in self-knowledge, conceived by Iannis Michalou(di)s and choreographed by Harry Mavromichalis. (La Mama, 74A E. 4th St. 212-475-7710. Sept. 18-20 at 7:30 and Sept. 21 at 2:30 and 7:30. Through Oct. 8.)

TAYLOR 2
Paul Taylor's six-member group performs several repertory pieces, including "Airs," set to Handel's "Concerti Grossi," and "Dust," set to Poulenc, in an outdoor performance at Dag Hammarskjöld Plaza. (No tickets necessary. Sept. 17 at 1.)

"DANCING IN THE STREETS"
The Philadelphia-based hip-hop dance company Rennie Harris Puremovement gives two outdoor performances of repertory work, including "Students of the Asphalt Jungle," "P-Funk," "March of the Antmen," and "Continuum."(Coffey Park, Red Hook, Brooklyn. 212-625-3505. No tickets necessary. Sept. 20-21 at 2.)

DANCE AS EVER
The group celebrates its tenth anniversary with four days of dance at Riverside Church featuring several performances by the new City Ballet principal dancer Alexandra Ansanelli and, on Sept. 18, one solo by the veteran principal dancer Peter Boal. Boal performs Leigh Witchel's 2000 solo, "A Shropshire Lad," created for him, and Ansanelli performs a new solo by Leigh Witchel, set to a Baroque German violin passacaglia played by Mat Maneri. (Riverside Dr. at 120th St. 212-870-6784. Sept. 18-20 at 8 and Sept. 21 at 2.)

NIGHT LIFE
CONCERTS

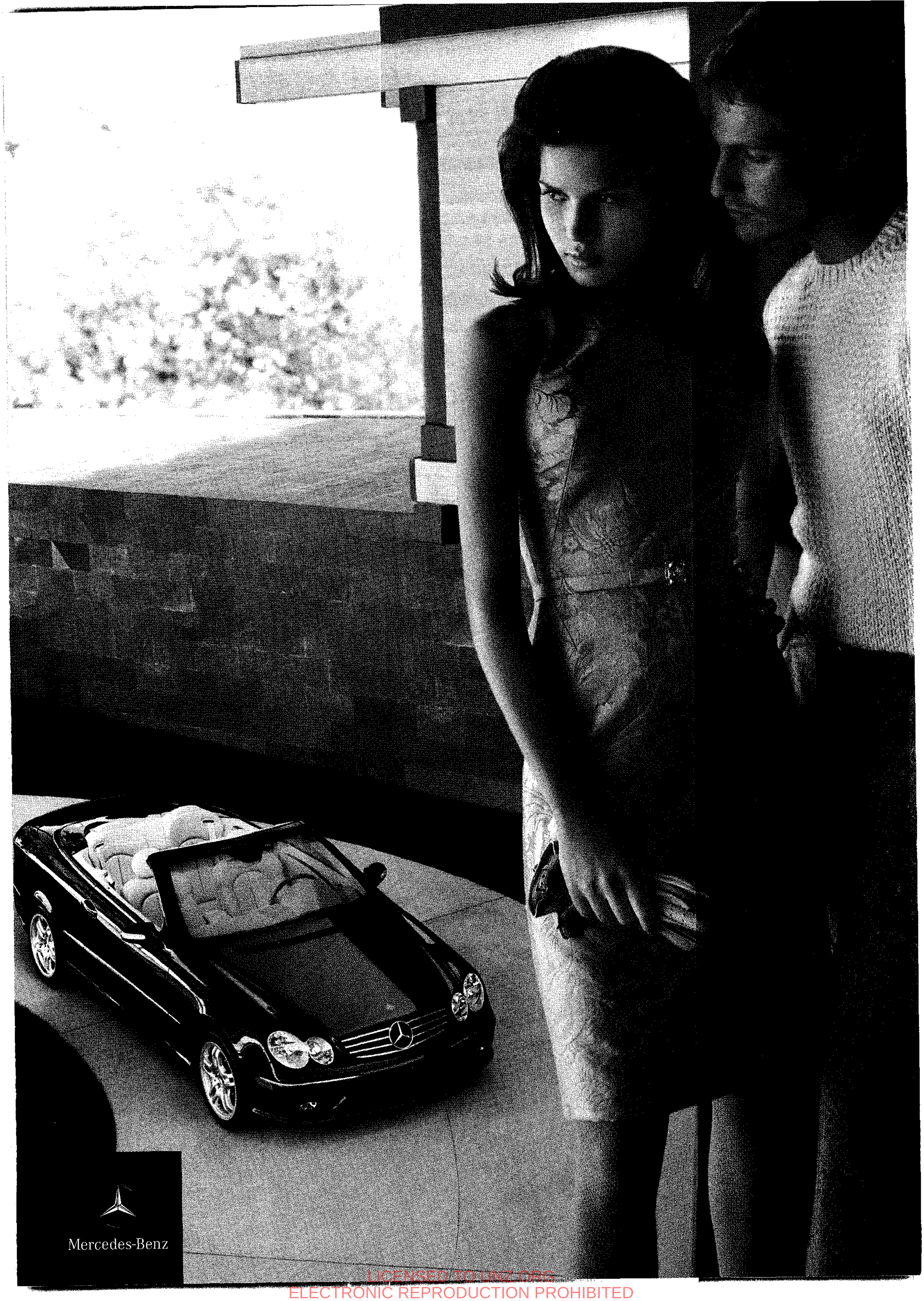
JAZZ AT LINCOLN CENTER
The season opens as Wynton Marsalis and the Lincoln Center Jazz Orchestra are joined by the Igor Butman Big Band for a program titled "Moscow Nights." (Alice Tully Hall. 212-721-6500. Sept. 18 and Sept. 20 at 8.)

MARIAH CAREY
The bloom may be somewhat off the rose for Mariah Carey after the critical skewering of her movie "Glitter," her well-publicized mental breakdown, and the lukewarm response to her comeback album, "Charmbracelet," but the voluptuous diva can still hit those eardrum-piercing high notes. (Radio City Music Hall, Sixth Ave. at 50th St. 212-247-4777. Sept. 18 at 8.)

JANE BIRKIN
The British actress and French sensation became the inspiration for a five-figure handbag and was an icon of the swinging sixties thanks to her revealing turn in Antonioni's film "Blow-Up" and to her relationship with the heroically dissolute Frenchman Serge Gainsbourg—she was his muse, the mother of his daughter (the actress Charlotte Gainsbourg), and the vocalist responsible for the heavy breathing on Gainsbourg's sultry single "Je T'Aime Moi Non Plus," the French forerunner to Donna Summer's "Love to Love You Baby." Birkin makes her United States début here, performing Gainsbourg's songs with a twist; backed by an Algerian violinist, Djamel Benyelles, and a quartet of French and Maghrebian musicians, she gives her wispy voice a world-music setting. (Florence Gould Hall, 55 E. 59th St. 212-355-6160. Sept. 18-19 at 8.)

LIVE FROM HOME
The wry, dapper Texan **Lyle Lovett**, the power-pop stalwart **Marshall Crenshaw**, and the Atlanta-based singer-songwriter **Michelle Malone** turn out for the monthly acoustic-music series at Housing Works Used Book Café. (126 Crosby St. 212-334-3324. Sept. 19 at 7:30.)

KEITH JARRETT, GARY PEACOCK, AND JACK DE JOHNETTE
Twenty years after the pianist Jarrett hooked up with the bassist Peacock and the drummer DeJohnette to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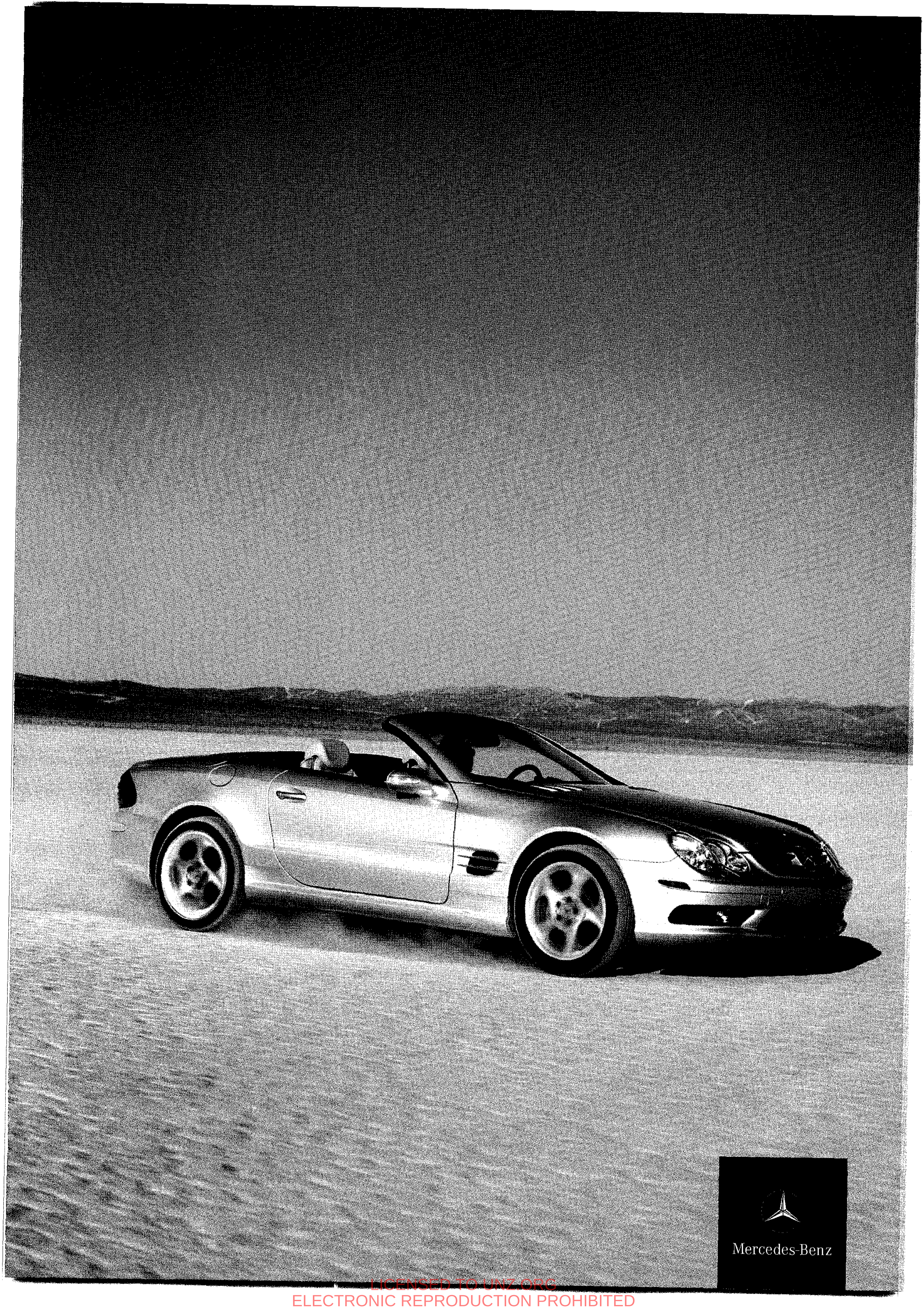
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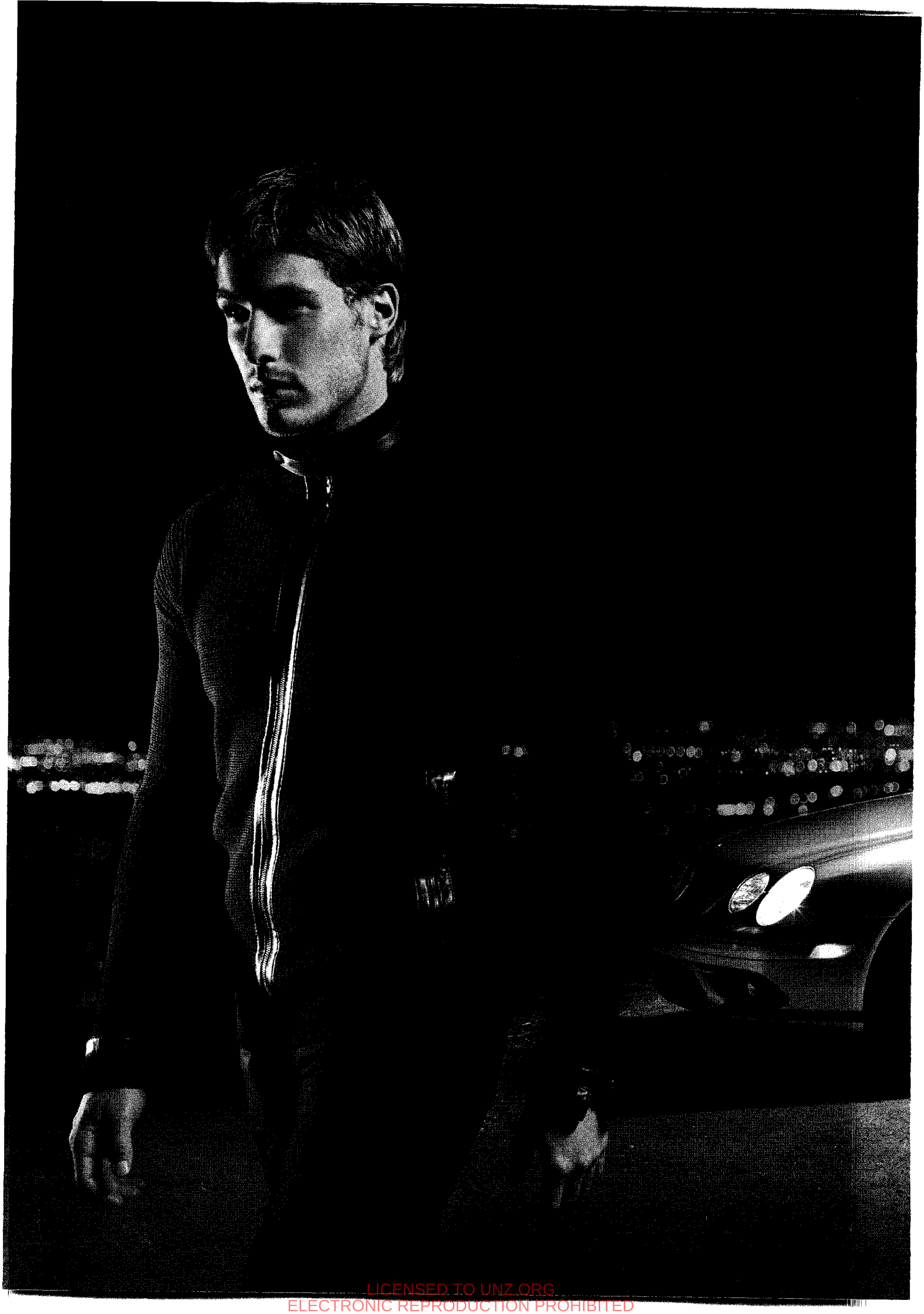

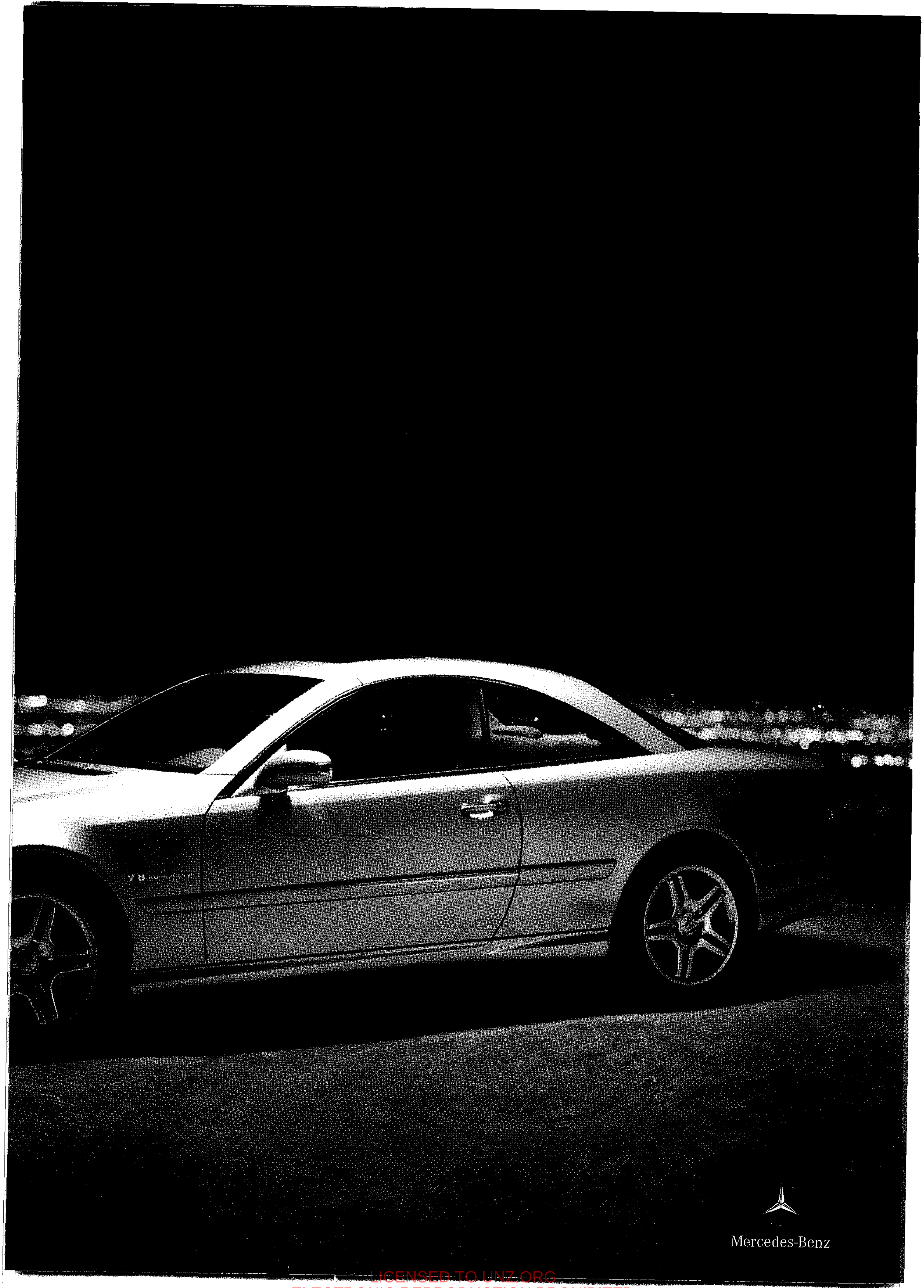

V8
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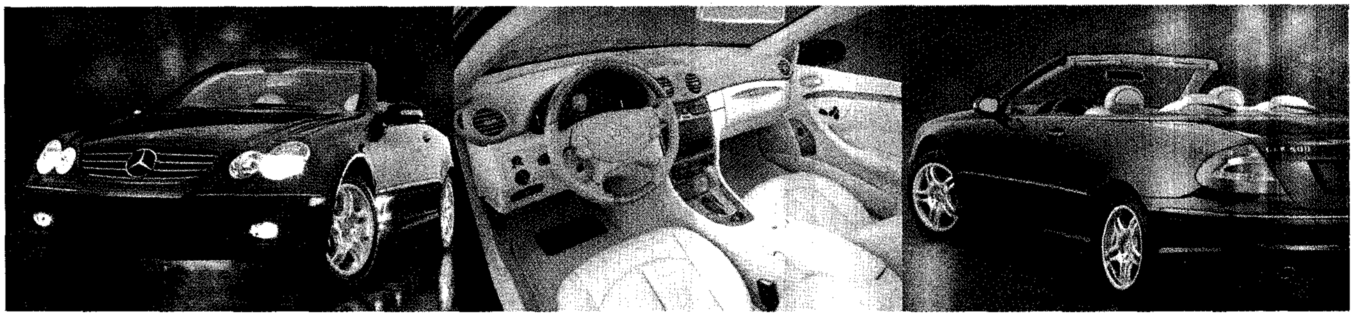

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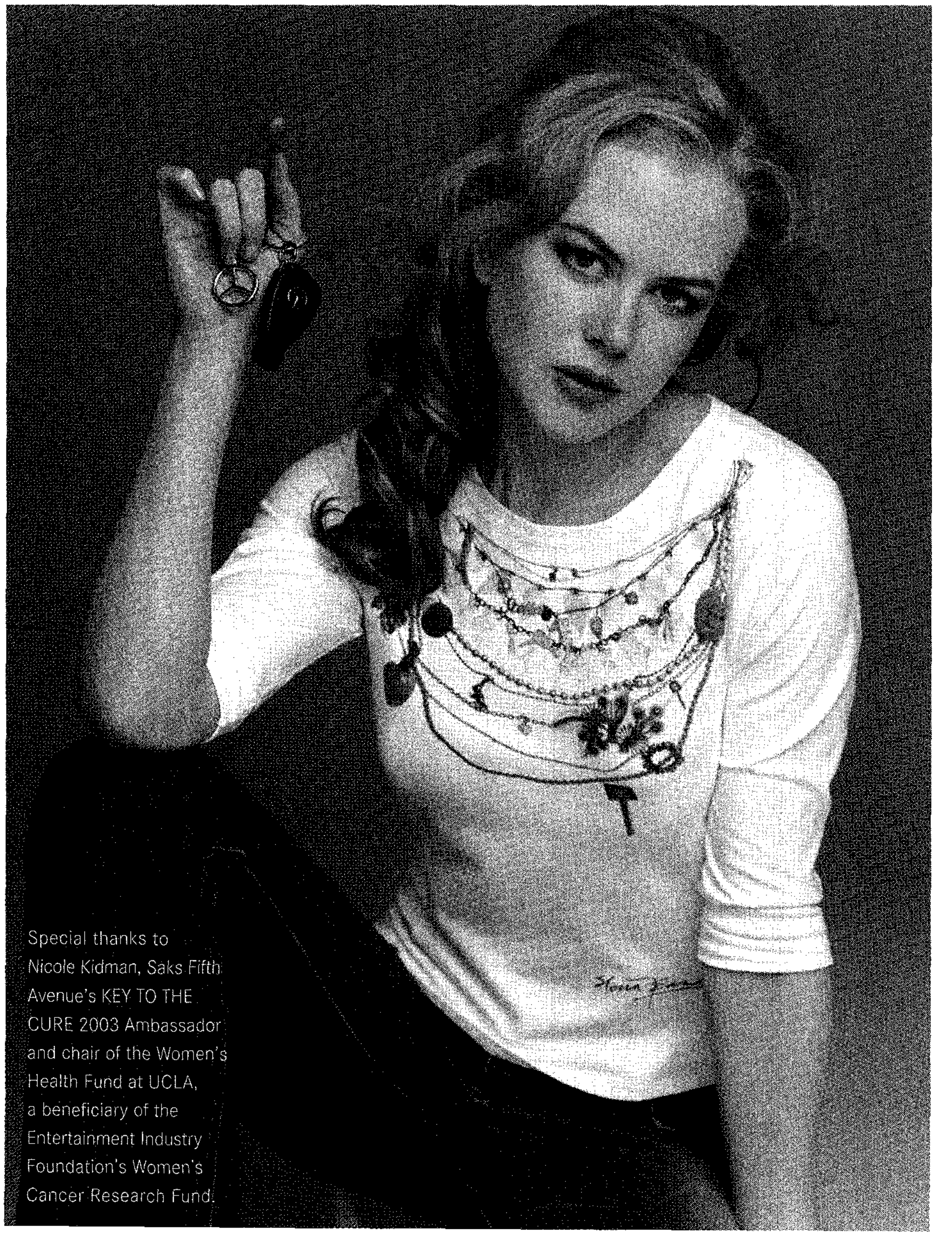
This September, shopping truly makes a difference when you join Mercedes-Benz in supporting Saks Fifth Avenue's KEY TO THE CURE to raise millions in the fight against women's cancers. The all new 2004 Mercedes-Benz CLK500 Cabriolet (pictured above), built exclusively for Saks Fifth Avenue's KEY TO THE CURE, will be displayed at Saks stores and available at all Mercedes-Benz authorized dealers in September 2003. Mercedes-Benz USA expects to contribute over $1 million toward the cause through the sale of these vehicles. Also stop by Saks Fifth Avenue's KEY TO THE CURE shopping event (September 17-20) and pick up the limited edition Danskin T-shirt (pictured below on Nicole Kidman), designed by Stella McCartney exclusively for Saks. All proceeds from T-shirt sales will benefit the Women's Cancer Research Fund.



Special thanks to Nicole Kidman, Saks Fifth Avenue's KEY TO THE CURE 2003 Ambassador and chair of the Women's Health Fund at UCLA, a beneficiary of the Entertainment Industry Foundation's Women's Cancer Research Fund.

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In this section: **Page 1** 2004 Mercedes CLK500 Cabriolet Mocha Black. On her: Oscar de la Renta brocade dress, Lambertson Truex leather driving gloves. On him: Michael Kors stone wool sweater, tweed pants, Bottega Veneta woven leather belt. **Pages 2–3** 2004 Mercedes SL500 Brilliant Silver. Gucci satin corset dress, black leather gloves. **Pages 4–5** 2004 Mercedes CL55 AMG Brilliant Silver. Gucci black wool zip sweater, black wool pants, patent leather loafers. **Pages 6–7** 2004 Mercedes SLK230 Special Edition Magma Red. On her: Celine black wool turtleneck, white leather snap front skirt, "Domino" black and white patent leather shoes. On him: Marc Jacobs patterned shirt. **Page 8** 2004 Mercedes CLK500 Cabriolet Mocha Black. On her: Chloé butterfly wing printed dress, Sergio Rossi shoes. On him: John Varvatos brown suede trench coat, wine-colored shirt, jeans, boots.

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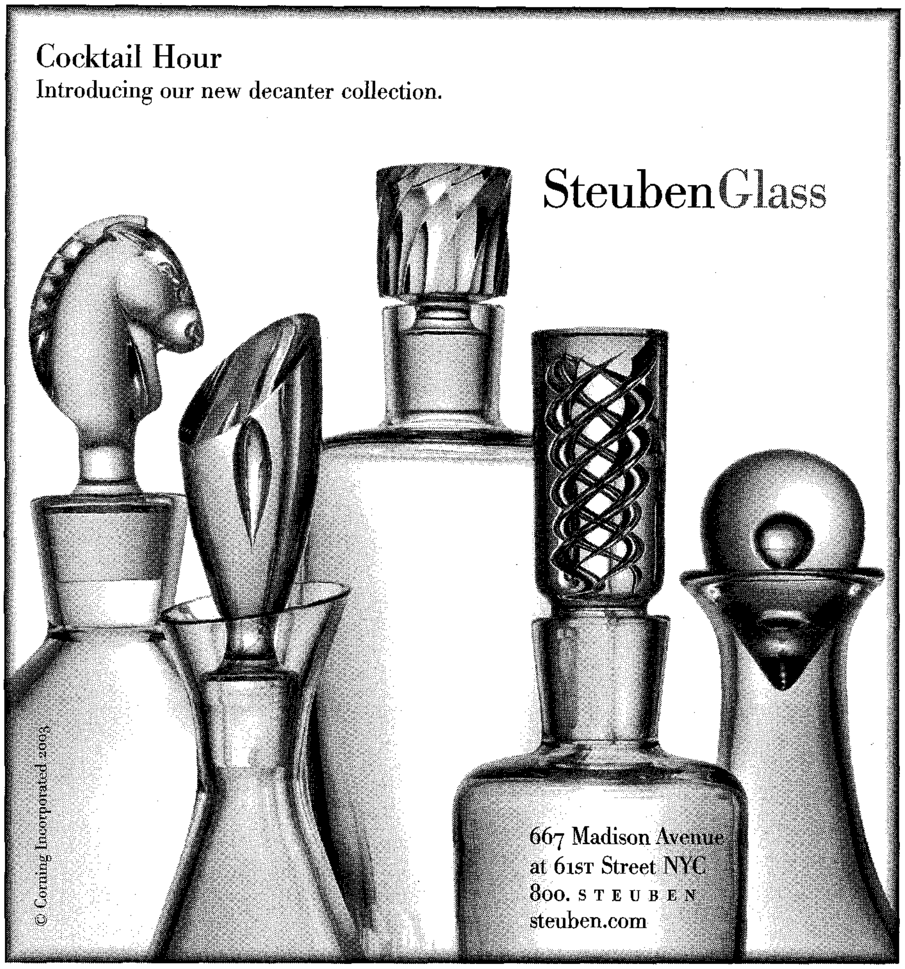
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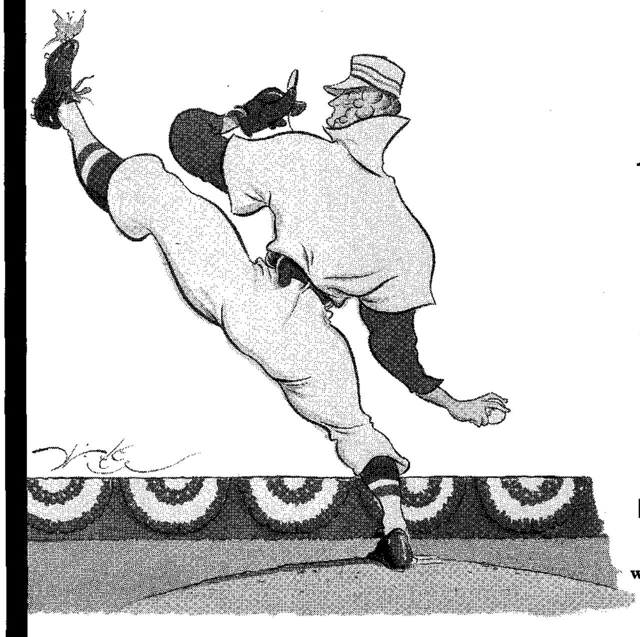

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form his Standards trio, this troika of compatible virtuosos still stands as the team to beat. Whether investigating the Great American Songbook or plunging headlong into edgy free improvisation, Jarrett's trio has the grace and power of a thoroughbred. They celebrate their two-decade watermark on an appropriately grand stage, the scene of consistent triumphs over the years. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800. Sept. 19 at 8.)

ARETHA FRANKLIN
The Queen of Soul returns with a new album, "So Damn Happy." (Radio City Music Hall. Sept. 20 at 8.)

ZANKEL HALL
Sept. 20 at 9: A night of Arab and Judeo-Andalusian music from Morocco, with the **Orchestra of Fes** and **Françoise Atlan.** Sept. 21 at 9: The **Brad Mehldau** trio. On his most recent album, last year's "Largo," Brad Mehldau traded in his previous identity as an introspective in-the-tradition piano stylist for an unexpected romp as a postmodern bad boy. With his seasoned trio in tow at this prestigious new venue, Mehldau will probably be on his best behavior, though left-field surprises may now be part of his game plan. (Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800.)

"HEALING THE DIVIDE"
Tom Waits, Richard Gere, Philip Glass, the Gyuto Tantric Choir, and others join the Dalai Lama for a concert promoting peace and reconciliation. (Avery Fisher Hall, Lincoln Center. 212-721-6500. Sept. 21 at 7.)

"MUSIC OF THE AMERICAS"
The pianist, accordion player, and percussionist Cesar Lerner joins the clarinettist, saxophonist, and vocalist Marcelo Moguilevsky for an evening of Argentinean folk and klezmer. (Americas Society, 680 Park Ave., at 68th St. 212-277-8359. Sept. 22 at 7:30.)

ELVIS COSTELLO
The bespectacled singer-songwriter, who has aged from a punk stalwart to a pop polymath, stops by with songs from his latest album, "North," a collection of dusky piano ballads. (Town Hall, 123 W. 43rd St. 212-307-7171. Sept. 22 and Sept. 24 at 8.)

CLUBS

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—Sept. 18: Top-shelf reggae with **Toots and the Maytals.** Sept. 22: The ever-charming soul and blues singer **Bobby (Blue) Bland.**

BOTTOM LINE
15 W. 4th St., at Mercer St. (212-228-6300)—Sept. 16-17: The James Taylor-with-fangs folk of **Loudon Wainwright III.** Sept. 18-19: The noted Irish folkie **Paul Brady.**

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—Sept. 17: The **Distillers.** Fronted by the decidedly outgoing Brody Armstrong (a tattooed and jackbooted hellcat who makes Courtney Love seem demure), this fundamentalist punk band from California is rancorously keen on keeping tartan bondage trousers and ripped T-shirts in style. Sept. 21-22: The anguished Omaha-based band **Cursive** has a heavy rhythm section and a driving approach that keep it out of the sinkholes of excessive introspection. The New Jersey foursome the **Wrens** open on Sept. 22.

IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—Sept. 18: **Goldfrapp's** celebrated début, 2000's "Felt Mountain," was full of lush, cinematic trip-hop. On its sophomore release, "Black Cherry," the British electronic duo cuts a sultry new groove, opting to challenge its audience with steamy synth-pop. Sept. 19: Since hitting the national stage as a regular on the radio show "A Prairie Home Companion" more than two decades ago, **Greg Brown** has established himself as a bona-fide American songwriting treasure. From his early folk, blues, country, and R. & B. efforts to an entire album devoted to William Blake's poetry to teaming up with the electric-guitarist Bo

Ramsey, Brown has expanded the meaning of traditional roots music. Sept. 23: Named after Brando's gang in "The Wild One," the **Black Rebel Motorcycle Club** is a trio of black-clad hipsters whose blend of dour guitar rock owes much of its heady power to the likes of the Jesus & Mary Chain. The band is currently touring behind its second album, "Take Them On, On Your Own."

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—Sept. 17: **Joss Stone.** This teen-age Brit can muster soulful vocals that would impress singers twice her age, and while her material is spotty so far, it's nice to have yet another soldier in the war against mindless teen pop.

NORTHSIX
66 N. 6th St., Williamsburg, Brooklyn (718-599-5103)—Sept. 17: The techno-laden rock of **Lake Trout.** With the complexly arranged, guitar-driven post-punk of Brooklyn's **Pilot to Gunner.** Sept. 18: The formerly married couple Sam Coomes and Janet Weiss make up **Quasi,** an indie-rock duo from Portland, Oregon, whose climate and political activism seem to influence their music, a wholly enjoyable sliding, mournful mess of ramshackle guitars and hollow singing. Their latest record, "Hot Shit," includes a striking new protest song, "White Devil's Dream," in which Coomes has pithy advice for individual members of the Presidential Administration. With **Hella,** a couple of guitar-and-drum wildmen from Sacramento, and the **Fiery Furnaces,** a brother and a sister from Brooklyn who work out their odd family dynamic through smoking bluesy originals.

SOUTHPAW
125 Fifth Ave., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-230-0236)—Sept. 17: Originally just a lighthearted dalliance for Tina Weymouth and Chris Franz, the married rhythm section of the Talking Heads, the **Tom Tom Club** is now their sole concern, though the music remains as carefree as ever. In the same spirit as their one big single, 1981's "Genius of Love," with its quirky rhythm and simple hook, the Tom Tom Club continues to experiment without letting the proceedings get too complicated. Sept. 18: The **Essex Green.** The pop sounds of yesterday, available today. Flutes, organs, and tambourines are alive and well in the songs of this Brooklyn-based trio. Their second album, "The Long Goodbye," is less psychedelic than their first. Instead of lolling about in musical meadows, the band has composed more ballads and rollicking soundscapes.

WEBSTER HALL
125 E. 11th St. (212-353-1600)—Sept. 22: The **Stereophonics.** Though well established in the U.K., this Welsh trio with a thing for burly alternative rock has yet to properly crack the States. Their fourth album, "You Gotta Go There to Come Back," is an ambitious, more mature effort that finds the band branching out from simply guitar-based clamor. With the moody Icelandic band the **Leaves.**

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

ALGONQUIN HOTEL
59 W. 44th St. (212-840-6800)—Through Sept. 27: The vocalist **Stacey Kent's** subtlety and close attention to lyrics may be tailor made for the Oak Room's cabaret setting, but it's her superior swing and easy rapport with her drummerless trio that put this American-born British transplant on the A-list of contemporary jazz singers. Dining.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—Through Sept. 21: If the light-fingered keyboardist **Joey DeFrancesco** isn't old-school enough with his Hammond-organ obsession, he adds to the bygone-days vibe by bringing along the vocalist **Joe Doggs,** the featured guest on DeFrancesco's recent "Falling in Love Again."

55 BAR
55 Christopher St. (212-929-9883)—Sept. 19: **Chris Potter's** association with Dave Holland has brought him wider renown—you can hear him on the new album "Extended Play: Live at Birdland"—but the saxophonist has been a talent to watch for more than a decade now. If his own albums haven't yet caught the zesty abandon of his performances, Potter proves himself an authoritative voice to be reckoned with. Sept. 21: **Tony Malaby,** another youngish saxophone talent unbeholden to the tried and true, brings in a quartet filled out by the bassist **Drew Gress** and a pair of drummers, **Tom Rainey** and **Mike Sarin.**

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—Through Sept. 21: **Arturo Sandoval** has blown his horn alongside Dizzy Gillespie and seen himself depicted by Andy Garcia in a TV movie, but the trumpet-and-piano virtuoso is more than the sum of his star associations. This Cuban expatriate's Latin roots mingle comfortably with his bebop extravagance. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.**

JAZZ GALLERY
290 Hudson St., near Spring St. (212-242-1063)—The Chilean expat **Claudia Acuña** (here with her quartet Sept. 19-20) is one of a growing number of Latin-American singers lately making their mark on the local jazz scene.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—Sept. 17-18: A rare visit from the **Bud Shank** quartet. Even as a darling of West Coast cool-school jazz back in the fifties, the saxophonist Shank could grab a furious bop line and hold on for dear life. This still-vibrant player is worth watching for the elegance of his classic approach. Sept. 19-21: The **Frank Wess** quintet. In a JVC Jazz Fest tribute to himself and fellow-octogenarian Joe Wilder earlier this summer, the saxophonist Wess proved that if you've retained taste and the accumulated wisdom of a six-decade career, age is just a state of mind. This Basie-band alumnus is still as hip a swing stylist as they come. Dining.

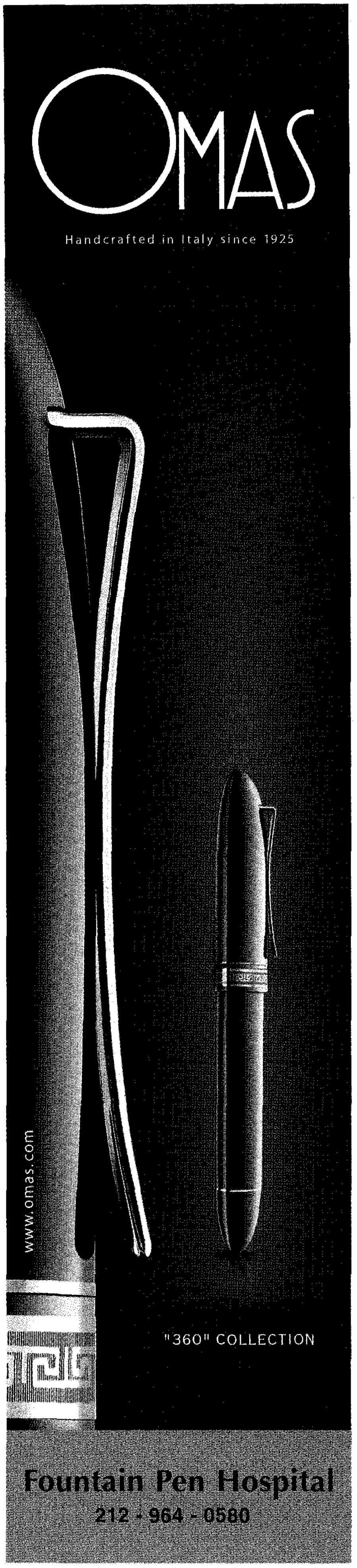
VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Through Sept. 21: They came, they played, they conquered. The **Bad Plus Trio** brought attitude and plenty of nerve to the Vanguard's vaunted stage earlier this year and their performance left audiences primed for more chops-heavy high jinks. Covering Blondie and Nirvana tunes alongside brainy originals and occasional pieces of sonic surrealism, the pianist Ethan Iverson, the bassist Reid Anderson, and the gracefully pile-driving drummer Dave King have more than enough musicianship to back up their tradition-bucking swagger. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART

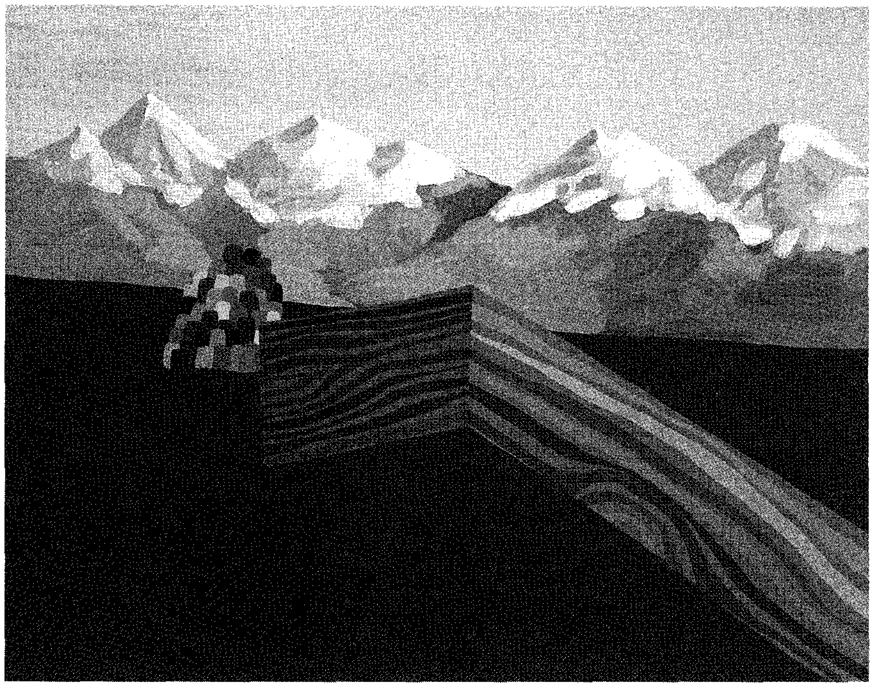
MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-879-5500)—On May 16, 1703, the six-foot-eight-inch tsar Peter the Great stood in a swamp beside the Neva River and proclaimed it the site for a new city that would take his name and earn the sobriquet "the Venice of the North." For **"Celebrating St. Petersburg,"** the Met raided its collection to mark the tricentennial of imperial Russia's capital city, and the small exhibition is a dazzler, stuffed with German silver, Sèvres porcelain, and snuffboxes encrusted with gold, enamel, ivory, and jewels from the reign of Catherine the Great (1762-96), an era aptly dubbed the "Age of Diamonds." Through Jan. 25. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART (MOMA QNS)
33rd St. at Queens Blvd., Long Island City (212-708-9400)—**"Ansel Adams at 100"** is a retrospective of the mountain man, whose exquisitely made, self-conscious photographs of spectacular Western scenery are a hard case in modern art. In form, Adams was impeccably modernist, and he had a command of photographic aesthetics as thoroughgoing, within its narrower range, as Edward Weston's. In feeling, Adams was a populist romantic, retreading sentimental conventions of God's country. To enjoy his imperious mastery and his swooning piety equally does not seem possible; they trip each other up. And the hanging of the smallish prints in the warehouse space of MOMA QNS is a blunder—the show looks dwarfed and dismal. Through



Nov. 3. ♦ This succinct retrospective tests Max Beckmann's long-pending claim to parity with the modern masters of Paris. The curator Robert Storr's trenchant selection and airy hanging make a winning case. How does one look at art that is laden with elusive, often quite lugubrious portent? The show's answer: as painting. Beckmann's manipulations of aggressive, theatrical space are dazzlingly supple. The trick, for the viewer, is to receive the pictures passively, letting their organization declare itself. Even, or especially, when its imagery is gnarled and bizarre, a great Beckmann attains startling unity, notably through making light-dark modelling inseparable from warm-cool color. Depth and surface become one. Beckmann does all the work: our role is to be bowled over. Through Sept. 29. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 10 to 5, and Friday evenings until 7:45.)



An untitled work by Jennifer Reeves, at Galeria Ramis Barquet.

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"From Picasso to Pollock"** revives a tried-and-true Guggenheim custom: installing highlights from the permanent collection. The result is a satisfying, albeit familiar parade of modernist styles and masterworks, from Miró and Brancusi down at ground level to de Kooning, Rothko, et al. up in the empyrean. Along the way, the show digresses, like a helplessly enthusiastic collector, to offer a mini-retrospective of watercolors by Wassily Kandinsky. The show ranges from his early scrambled seascapes to late biomorphic abstractions, neatly encapsulating a great, eccentric career. To visitors from Chelsea, Kandinsky's trippy, spin-cycle compositions may suggest links to contemporary talents like Julie Mehretu and Steve Di Benedetto. Through Sept. 28. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—We've seen a lot of him lately, but **"Ellsworth Kelly: Red Green Blue"** is the kind of spare, smart show that can perk up even satiated appetites. Organized by Toby Kamps at the Museum of Contemporary Art, San Diego, the exhibition focusses on a group of eight large paintings made between 1958 and 1965. The continuity of color choices (it's the same red, the same green, the same blue every time) puts the focus on simple changes in scale and shape and offers a kind of Rothko Chapel-like immersion in Kelly's elemental hedonism. There are a few rooms of supplementary material—sketches, prints, and a new canvas in the same palette—but at its heart the show really boils down to just two rooms, three colors, and one sleek vibe. Through Nov. 2. ♦ In **"The American Effect,"** forty-seven artists and filmmakers react to the myths and policies of the United States. Through Oct. 12. ♦ For sheer joy in materials, no one can compete with Sarah Sze. Binder clips, bright-blue Windex bottles, fake grass, PVC pipe, drinking straws, orange string—put it all together in the Whitney's moatlike sunken courtyard and you've got **"The Triple Point of Water."** This refers to the solid, liquid, and gaseous states of H_2O, and it's an ethereal title, but the elaborate installation is a marvel, a delicate, multilevel habitat, a miniature city or ecosystem animated by little fans and burbling aquariums. Through Oct. 9. ♦ Louise Bourgeois did most of the two hundred and twenty pen and pencil drawings in **"The Insomnia Drawings"** between November, 1994, and June, 1995, during a prolonged stretch of sleeplessness. The work, she says, is "a kind of rocking or stroking and an attempt to find a kind of peace. Like rocking a baby to sleep." Casting her own psyche as a fretful and voracious infant is vintage Bourgeois strategy, and the drawings—mostly in red ballpoint, with an emphasis on circles, spirals, looming buildings, and abstracted visages—are as twitchy and hallucinatory as you might fear. Through Sept. 21. (Open Wednesdays through Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6; Fridays, 1 to 9.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM AT ALTRIA

120 Park Ave., at 42nd St. (212-878-2550)—The artist Mark Bradford supports himself as a hairstylist in South Central Los Angeles—he's best known for shimmering abstract paintings collaged with the sheer strips of paper used in permanent waves. A billboard-size example in vivid blue is the strongest element in this miscellany of an installation, inspired by Ponce de León and his quest for the fountain of youth in Florida. There are several sculptural one-liners, including shelves of water bottles adorned with silver champagne plaques (Poland Spring with bling). Other elements are far more cryptic, like the stuffed crow flying through the wall (an allusion to Jim Crow meant to refer to alleged voting irregularities in black districts during the past Presidential election?). Through Oct. 24. (Open weekdays, 11 to 6, and Thursday evenings until 7:30.)

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF NATURAL HISTORY

Central Park W. at 79th St. (212-769-5100)—The Irma & Paul Milstein Family Hall of Ocean Life has reopened. The ninety-four-foot blue-whale model is still suspended from the ceiling, where it has invited generations of schoolchildren to crane their necks and gaze up openmouthed. But now, in the newly renovated digs, the muted cerulean light glimmers on scientifically accurate, repainted pelagic bulk. Meanwhile, on the floor, interactive information consoles, refurbished dioramas, and a mesmerizing film of undersea life tell you all you need to know about red tube worms, dolphins, sharks, coral reefs, and the recently discovered Indonesian coelacanth. (Open daily, 10 to 5:45.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART

Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—Robert Lesser, whose collection of toy robots wintered at the museum a couple of years ago, has loaned another pop trove: more than a hundred paintings for the covers of pulp magazines, primarily from the thirties and forties. The artists were academically trained illustrators like J. Allen St. John, Rafael De Soto, and Walter Baumhofer, and they worked in a fiercely competitive environment that nourished pictorial testosterone. If you're curious to see the unreconstructed masculine id in action or haven't sublimated a thirst for bound blondes or spurting pistols under titles like "The Grove of Doom," this exhibit is a kitsch cornucopia. Through Oct. 19. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5; weekends, 11 to 6.)

DAHESH MUSEUM

580 Madison Ave., at 57th St. (212-759-0606)—**"French Artists in Rome: Ingres to Degas, 1803-1873"** inaugurates the new twenty-five-thousand-square-foot home of the eight-year-old institution. The focus is primarily on winners of the Prix de Rome, and the happy subject of their travel between the École des Beaux-Arts and the French Academy Villa Medici, in Rome, seems calculated to bring skeptical viewers to the museum's specialty, academic art—the genre against which the Impressionists staged their rebellion—although the occasional Impressionist work is a welcome addition. After the avalanche of Bouguereaus and David d'Angerses that precedes it, Degas's "Woman on a Terrace"—she appears flanked by a pair of translucently sketched red ibises—looks like wild innovation. Through Nov. 2. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 11 to 6.)

MUSEUM OF ARTS & DESIGN

40 W. 53rd St. (212-956-3535)—Just in case you thought the former American Craft Museum wasn't serious about its name change, the new MAD has hosted an ambitious survey that quietly snubs the one category—unique handmade objects—most nearly synonymous with its old craft mandate. Apart from that omission, **"USDesign 1975-2000,"** which originated at the Denver Art Museum, selects from everything under the sun: architecture, furniture, posters, Rollerblades, movie trailers, you name it. As a potted history of recent design trends, the show inevitably offers lots of familiar material, by the likes of Frank Gehry, Michael Graves, Karim Rashid, and Steven Holl. Jaded viewers may be tempted, perhaps unfairly, to begin thinking of MAD as Cooper-Hewitt Lite. Through Nov. 2. (Open Mondays, noon to 6; Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 6; and Thursday evenings until 8.)

NATIONAL ACADEMY MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-369-4880)—The Academy's début exhibition, in 1826, included women, which was remarkably advanced for the era. Shortly thereafter, its schools added members of the fair sex to the student rolls and elected women as academicians. More than a hundred items from the museum's collection of the paintings, sculptures, and works on paper made by these students and members are on view in **"Challenging Tradition: Women of the Academy, 1826-2003,"** with examples ranging from Mary Cassatt to Helen Frankenthaler and Maya Lin. Unfortunately, the tang of innovation seems to have worn off—the gracious, wainscotted rooms are filled with a conspicuously well-bred group of portraits, landscapes, and geometric abstractions. The Academy's founding fathers could drink tea beside this art without a qualm. Through Jan. 4. (Open Wednesdays and Thursdays, noon to 5, and Fridays through Sundays, 11 to 6.)

NEW MUSEUM OF CONTEMPORARY ART

583 Broadway (212-219-1222)—The boisterous and ambitious **"Black President"** show pays tribute to the late Fela Anikulapo-Kuti (1938-97), a visionary Nigerian musician (pioneer of the Afrobeat sound), ladies' man (husband to twenty-eight wives), and activist (self-appointed "black presi-

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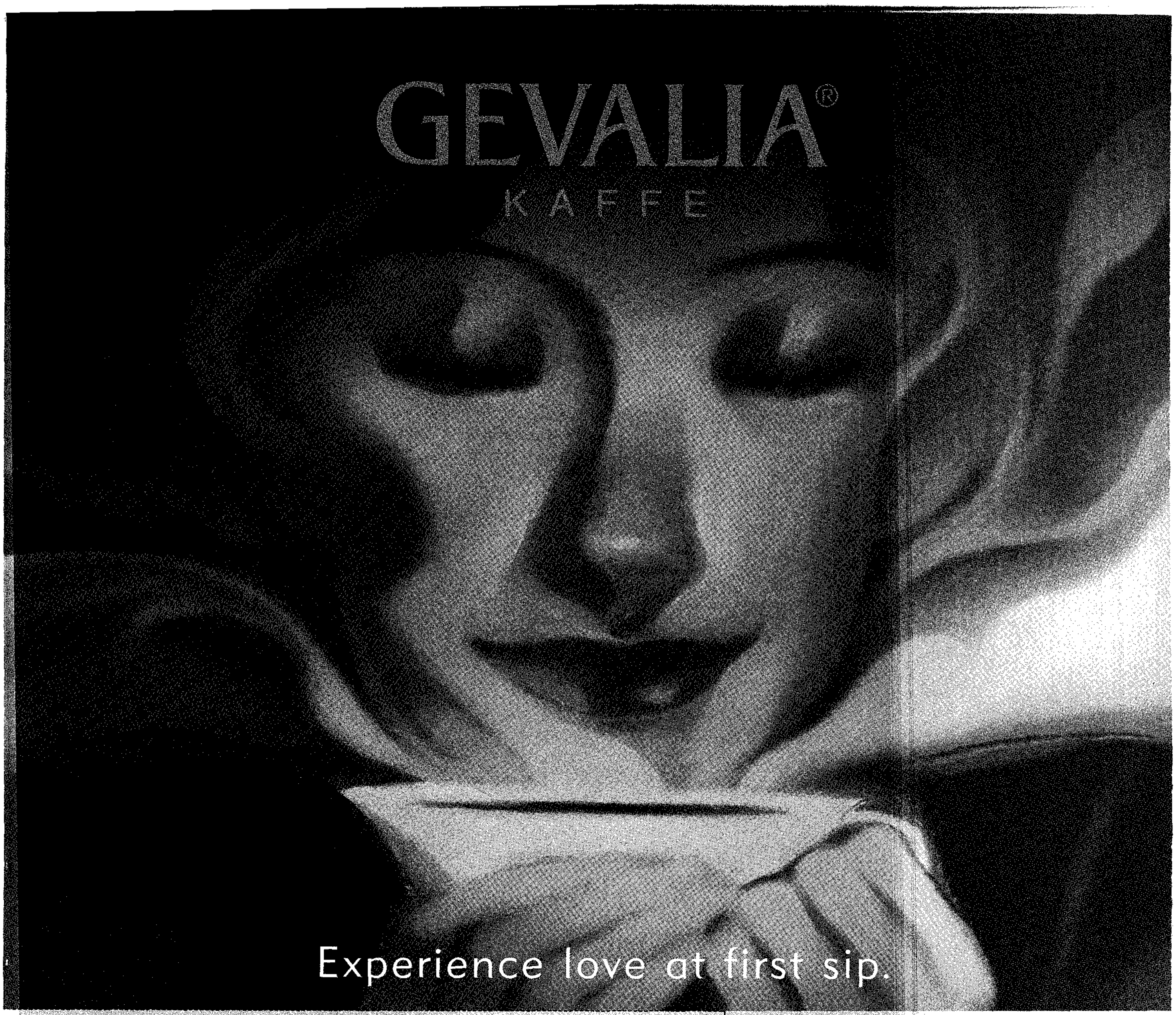
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dent"). Some artists riff on Fela's black-power politics (Klaus Bürgel and Kara Walker sardonically re-create tools of bondage used in slavery in twenty-two-karat-gold miniature). Others comment on his attitudes toward women (Yinka Shonibare fills a platform stage with brightly clad but headless female figures). Near the start of the show, Barkley Hendricks sums up Fela's complex character in a portrait of the artist as a haloed saint, with a microphone in one hand and the other on his crotch. The legacy of this controversial genius overshadows the impact (both collective and individual) of the art work, but the show is a must-see nonetheless. Through Sept. 28. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, noon to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

GALLERIES—UPTOWN

Unless otherwise noted, galleries are open Tuesdays through Saturdays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6.

ADAM DANT
For his second New York show, the English draftsman has created a spurious think tank, the Bureau for the Investigation of the Subliminal Image. Under the aegis of the B.I.S.I., Dant produces diagrams, maps, and texts that guide viewers to nuggets of clandestine imagery. Ever noticed the self-portrait hidden in the background of Leonardo's "Madonna of the Rocks"? What about the "late Picasso figures" lurking in the clouds of smoke in Monet's "Gare Saint-Lazare"? The B.I.S.I.'s revelations aren't likely to change art history, but their whimsical thoroughness may spice up your next trip to the Met. Through Oct. 18. (Baumgold, 74 E. 79th St. 212-861-7338.)

BRENDA GOODMAN
The veteran abstract painter has opened a new chapter in her work. Goodman's hovering planes of color now act as frames and veils for collaged photographs, mostly from *Life* magazines of the thirties. The images—of acrobats, orphans, and the occasional family member—tip the pictures toward sentimentality, but they also help give Goodman's compositions a fresh sense of plenitude and liveliness. Her palette, with its tweaked indoorsy ambers, oranges, and greens, has a ravishing, claustrophobic intricacy. Imagine a collaboration between Rauschenberg and Vuillard. Through Oct. 4. (Littlejohn, 41 E. 57th St. 212-980-2323.)

ELLIOTT GREEN
In the best of these sixteen works on paper, Green plays a solitaire version of exquisite corpse, grafting found paper-doll outfits (one standout: a jaunty Mexican sombrero and a striped chemise) onto pencil sketches of cartoon figures. From a distance they look like historical costume prints; up close they look like the experiments of a Pop-minded Dr. Frankenstein with a soft spot for flea markets. Through Oct. 4. (De Nagy, 724 Fifth Ave., at 57th St. 212-262-5050.)

JUDY PFAFF
Viewers may walk into this tumultuous, gorgeous show and think: it's Sarah Sze on steroids. But Pfaff, one of the pioneers of installation art, helped pave the way for younger artists like Sze and Jessica Stockholder by first conflating painting and sculpture and then combining it with a scavenger impulse (check out the gargantuan piece of driftwood). For her current outing, she divides the gallery into discrete but overlapping zones, from a crimson explosion of grids (as if "The Matrix" had reloaded in Matisse's "Red Studio") to a meditative pocket of white and pale blue with a suspended lattice of steel stars. Through Oct. 11. (Ameringer Yohe, 20 W. 57th St. 212-445-0051.)

JENNIFER REEVES
The uptown portion of a two-part exhibition (the other section is being shown at the gallery's new space in Chelsea, at 532 W. 24th St.) includes paintings, works on paper, and assemblages, which contain phrases from devotional texts, pop songs, or art criticism. Through Oct. 11. (Galeria Ramis Barquet, 41 W. 57th St. 212-675-3421.)

GALLERIES—CHELSEA

BRETT COOK-DIZNEY
For a show called "Revolution," the activist-artist offers a gallery of inspirational portraits. Edward Said, Nelson Mandela, Arundhati Roy, Julia Butterfly-Hill, and like-minded benefactors of humanity smile out at us from mirrored boxes. A sampling of quotations and books are arranged on shelves below. As an exercise in liberal piety—it's almost literally a chapel—the show is pleasantly unembarrassed of its own convictions, but the portraits themselves are clearly based on overly familiar press photographs, and their book-jacket amiability wears out its welcome fairly quickly. Where, one begins to wonder, is the Ann Coulter of Chelsea? Through Oct. 4. (P.P.O.W, 555 W. 25th St. 212-647-1044.)

WIM DELVOYE
These delicate, brightly rusted filigree structures resolve into sawhorses, shovels, and signs ("Road Ends") and, at close range, into endless patterns of crosses and coats of arms, with each tip boasting a tiny gargoyle and each gear a rose window. "Chantier" ("Construction Site"), along with "Caterpillar," at Freedman Plaza in Central Park, is part of a series that puts crippling decorative touches on useful items and offers impractical homages to practical stuff. The look of prettified abandonment runs counter to the comic productivity of last year's "Cloaca," the New Museum's elaborate mechanical digestive system that manufactured bowel movements. Through Sept. 30. (Public Art Fund at Madison Square Park. 212-980-4575.)

RITA MC BRIDE
A galvanized steel chute, painted bright orange, snakes through the gallery from the first floor to the third, like a heating duct on a joyride. McBride is on a spree herself, borrowing from architecture to poke fun at minimalism, with its "specific objects" (to quote Donald Judd) supposedly stripped of all reference, unlike the awnings (blank purple vinyl) and A.T.M.s (cast in titanium) on view here. McBride's coup is in creating art that implies utility in pared-down forms almost as pleasing as Judd's stacks or Flavin's fluorescent tubes, which she wryly alludes to in a row of plumbing conduits cast in Murano glass. Through Oct. 11. (Alexander & Bonin, 132 Tenth Ave., at 18th St. 212-367-7474.)

JIL WEINSTOCK / GERHARD MAYER
Weinstock, whose last show turned Barnet Newman's "zips" into zippers, continues to offer a sort of garment-district take on minimalist painting. She makes monochromes from crumpled nightgowns, neo-Carl Andre floor mats out of stockings, and stripe paintings out of men's shirts. The implicitly feminine/feminist flavor of these makeovers is highlighted by Mayer's more masculine, or at least otherworldly, black-and-white drawings in the back room. Mayer relies not on fabric and wit but on a Rapidograph and a set of earnest, idiosyncratic drawing rules. From thousands of tiny, fastidiously controlled dashes and arcs, weird, blizzardy geometric patterns emerge. Mayer carries doodling to new levels of geeky elegance and rigor. Through Oct. 11. (Caren Golden, 526 W. 26th St. 212-727-8304.)

THE ART GUYS
Skeptics who think artists just want to have a laugh at the expense of impressionable viewers may want to steer clear of the Art Guys. Past projects include a giant sneezing nose (complete with nasal effluvium) and a shelf lined with ninety-nine bottles of beer. In this overcrowded sendup of technology, the Houston-based duo is at its best when sticking to shtick—the "Squirting TV Gag" gives unsuspecting viewers a spritz as they pause before a monitor. Less successful is a series of computer-generated drawings that replicate the same abstract scribble once, then four times, then sixteen times. It's a tired variation on the old joke: Have you heard the one about minimalism? Through Oct. 4. (DeWitt, 521 W. 26th St. 212-695-6845.)

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A MATTER OF STYLE:
SELECTIONS FROM
THE COVER ARCHIVES

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Rebecca Mead
Ken Auletta
Larissa MacFarquhar
Seymour M. Hersh
Lawrence Wright
Edna O'Brien
Maira Kalman
and more

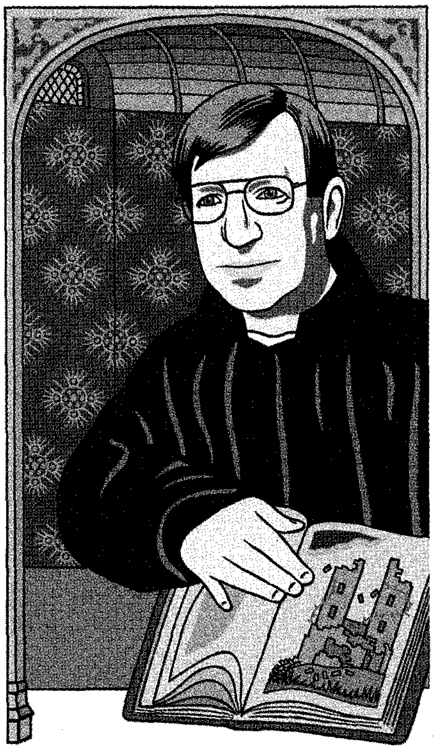
AND: A calendar of *New Yorker*
events across the country

GALLERIES–SOHO

KRISTIN BAKER
Baker, who compares the spectacles of auto racing to the entertainments in the Roman Colosseum, coaxes viewers into "Flat Out" with a path of orange reflective cones, done, like all of her work, in the colors and textures of Formula One and road safety. Her canvases on racing themes are done with acrylic on PVC, and her compositions are dizzying. The sharp curve in the track in "Ride the Lightning" leads naturally to "Big Bang Vrooom," which depicts the multicolored underside of an exploding vehicle. Through Sept. 27. (Deitch Projects, 76 Grand St. 212-343-7300.)

GALLERIES–BROOKLYN

BEN PARRY
Who knew that eight televisions broadcasting white noise could sound so much like artillery fire? The ingenious sleight-of-machine is the work of Ben Parry, a young artist from Liverpool who specializes in motorized assemblages of found objects. The tubes surround a rocket topped by a spinning doll head, which, depending on your mood, resembles either a frantic citizen trying to keep up with information overload or a sinister android equipped for total surveillance. The works in the outside gallery are even grimmer: Arabic-script Coca-Cola cans arranged in the shape of a submachine gun; a globe outfitted with a gas mask rotating under a tattered umbrella. The pieces are mounted on fire extinguishers, and the whole scene looks ready to explode. Through Oct. 20. (Black & White, 483 Driggs Ave. 718-599-8775.)



Music by Stephen Hartke will be performed by both the Philharmonic and the Hilliard Ensemble this week.

MICHAEL KUPPERMAN

"GUSH"
The best pieces in this group show run counter to the enthusiasm of the title. The ironic tone is set by Dan Golden's piece, "Four Comedians from the 1960s," which broadcasts the albums of Bob Newhart, Bill Cosby, Woody Allen, and Lenny Bruce on a row of Fisher-Price record players. Audience laughter from all four albums is audible throughout the gallery, and it alters the experience of seeing, say, Fritz Chesnut's paintings of karaoke singers. What might be heroic grimaces become, under the influence of the background laughter, wildly undignified. More pious work, like Angela de Rosette's paintings of farm animals, suffers from the sensation that it might be being mocked. Through Sept. 28. (Dumbo Arts Center, 30 Washington St. 718-694-0831.)

PHOTOGRAPHY

TIM DAVIS
In a switch from his last show in New York, in which he toyed with the effects of light on suburban landscapes, Davis now takes on the museum environment itself, photographing paintings and carefully allowing the museum's own lighting to obscure the image or highlight the painter's brushwork. Davis's best work—his takes on Richter, Vermeer, and Whistler, for example—is both smart and disorienting. At times, Davis's flash of light veering across the frame makes a familiar image come alive, and the cracks and fissures inherent to aging paint form a part of the art-historical landscape. Through Oct. 11. (Sikkema, 530 W. 22nd St. 212-929-2262.)

PHILIP-LORCA DI CORCIA
A mini-retrospective that coincides with the publication of "A Storybook Life," a collection of twenty-five years' worth of the influential artist's most personal work. The show opens with a portly man asleep in bed, surrounded by a sad-faced woman on the television screen, a Teddy bear, and a half-full glass of wine. It closes with the same man in an open casket, surrounded by thousands of flowers in a pink-tinged funeral home. Although diCorcia used his family in many of his staged photographs, the narrative is illusory, more dreamlike than autobiographic. DiCorcia's images can be unsettling (babies cry alone, people appear ill), poignant, or even funny. It might not be diCorcia's own Pinto that has been left overnight atop a hydraulic lift, or his child who is playing next to a forest fire, or his grandmother who has decided to walk away from her wheelchair, but this master of pinpoint lighting and cinematic detail certainly tells a compelling story. Through Oct. 11. (Pace Wildenstein, 534 W. 25th St. 212-929-7000.)

DIDIER MASSARD
At first glance Massard's constructed landscapes seem a bit off—plausible, but weird. In one large cibachrome print, a huge cherry tree sprouts from a small, mossy island barely large enough to contain the profusion of white blooms. In another, a giant mangrove tree looms over an algae-covered swamp like a forbidding castle's keep. Other pictures, like a shot of a Japanese pagoda seen beyond two giant trees and across a pond or an image of a waterfall that is just too perfect, bring the fact that these vistas have been hand-built in a meticulously lit studio into clear focus. Drawing equally on the traditions of Chinese scroll painting and "Star Trek," Massard briefly suspends disbelief, then extends an invitation to enjoy his perfectly crafted universe. Through Oct. 11. (Saul, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-627-2410.)

"SIDE BY SIDE"
Three years ago, on the premise that the perspectives of working-class people were unrepresented in the media, Bread and Roses, the cultural organization of 1199, the health-care workers' union, gave a hundred cameras to migrant workers on Long Island and asked them to photograph their lives. The most recent installment in Unseen America's series of exhibits features work by Asian garment workers in Chinatown and Jewish retirees on the Lower East Side. The ideological conceit may be the initial draw here, but the photographs are disarming in their modesty and in what they aim to show. In one, a Chinese sample maker captured a Falun Gong parade in her neighborhood that could never take place in her homeland; elsewhere, her colleague notes, beside her grainy shot of a jet stream plowing through the stratosphere: "I was hoping that someone would write my name in the sky." Through Sept. 30. (Gallery 1199, 310 W. 43rd St. 212-603-1186.)

Short List

KATY GRANNAN
Salon 94, 12 E. 94th St. 646-672-9212.
Through Oct. 29.
REAGAN LOUIE
Von Lintel, 555 W. 25th St. 212-242-0599.
Through Oct. 4.
ARNO RAFAEL MINKKINEN
De Nagy, 724 Fifth Ave. 212-262-5050.
Through Oct. 4.
TRIENNIAL
International Center of Photography,
1133 Sixth Ave., at 43rd St. 212-857-0000.
Through Nov. 30.

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES

SOTHEBY'S
Sept. 17 at 10:15 A.M.: Chinese ceramics and works of art, including a luminous olive-green jade disk from the Neolithic period. ♦ Sept. 19 at 10:15 A.M. and 2: Carpets from Europe, India, and Central Asia. Among the highlights are a late-sixteenth-century Karapinar carpet from central Anatolia (in fragments, but expected to bring up to a hundred and eighty thousand dollars) and a late-eighteenth-century Mughal pashmina prayer rug from Kashmir (which you can enjoy intact). (York Ave. at 72nd St. 212-606-7000.)

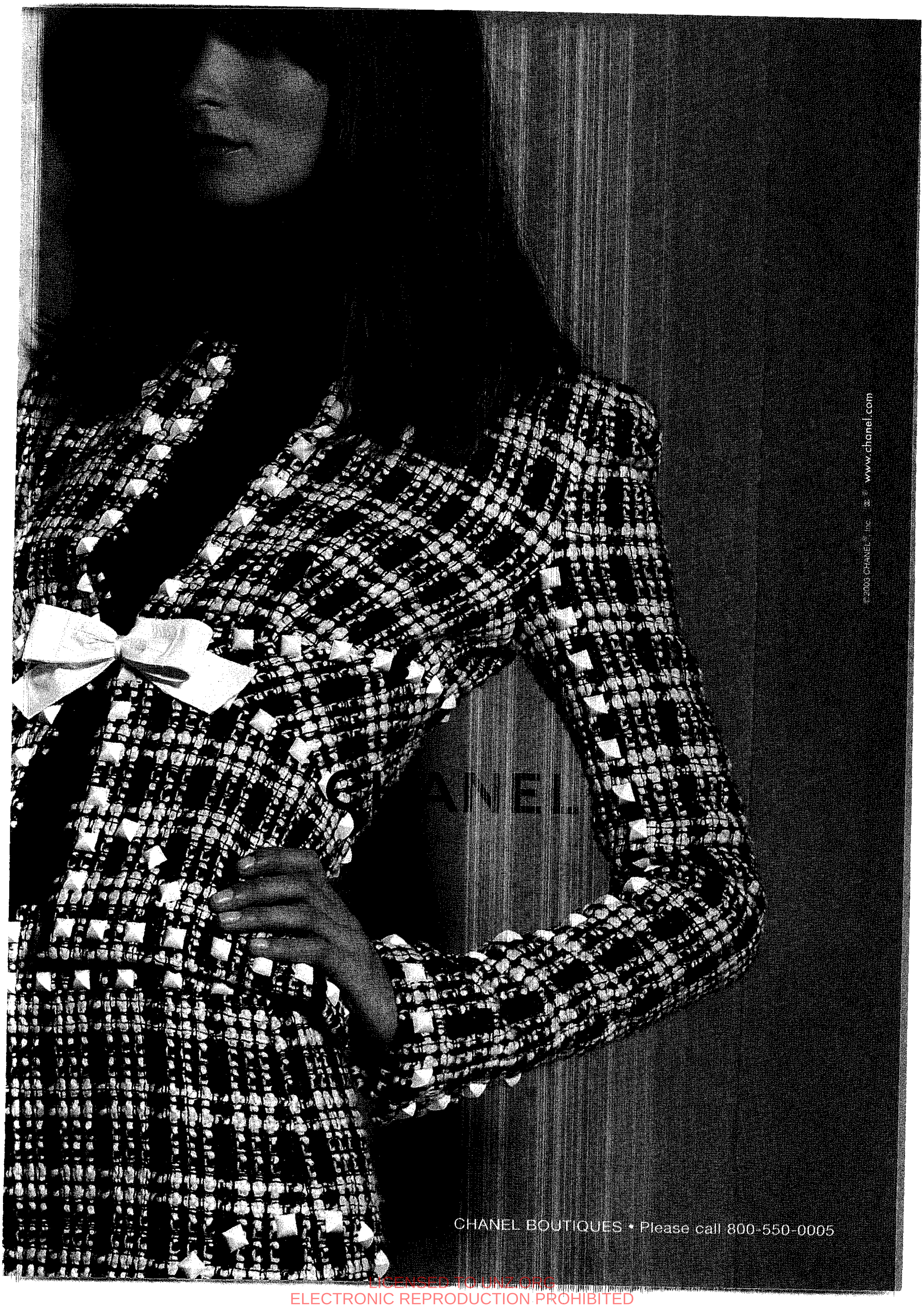
CHRISTIE'S
The house's Asian week continues with two days of sales. Sept. 17 at 10 A.M. and 2: Indian and Southeast Asian art works (including a bronze figure of Shiva as the Lord of Music from the Chola period, expected to bring up to six hundred thousand dollars), along with a selection of twentieth-century Indian paintings. ♦ Sept. 18 at 10 A.M.: The Gangolf Geis collection of classical Chinese furniture. ♦ Sept. 18 at 11 A.M. and 2: Chinese ceramics and works of art. ♦ Sept. 19 at 10 A.M. and 2: Fine jewels. ♦ Sept. 23 at 10 A.M.: Postwar and contemporary art. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)

SWANN
Sept. 18 at 10:30 A.M. and 2:30: A large group of costume designs made by Chagall in 1942 for a ballet production of Rachmaninoff's opera "Aleko" are among the highlights of a sale of prints and drawings from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. (104 E. 25th St. 212-254-4710.)

WENDY NEW YORK ARMORY ANTIQUES SHOW
A new wave of European dealers strengthens the ranks of the prestigious firm's fall show. (7th Regiment Armory, Park Ave. at 67th St. 914-698-3442. Sept. 17-21.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
OPERA

NEW YORK CITY OPERA
Francesca Zambello's new production of Handel's **"Alcina,"** with Christine Goerke, Lauren Skuce, Katharine Goeldner, Jennifer Dudley, Keith Jameson, and Joshua Winograde; Daniel Beckwith conducts. (Sept. 18 at 7:30 and Sept. 21 at 1:30.) ♦ The season's first **"Carmen,"** with Hadar Halevy and Michael Hendrick as Carmen and Don José, Angela Fout as Micaëla, and Kelly Anderson as Escamillo; Steven White. (Sept. 19 at 8.) ♦ James Robinson—the author of some of City Opera's most imaginative recent productions—has returned to direct a new staging of **"Lucia di Lammermoor,"** with Jennifer Welch-Babidge, Jorge Antonio Pita, and Stephen Powell; George Manahan. (Sept. 20 at 1:30.) ♦ Mark Lamos's exquisite staging of **"Madama Butterfly,"** featuring Chen Sue Panariello, Mika Shigematsu, Brandon Jovanovich, and Michael Corvino; Manahan. (Sept. 20 at 8.) (New York State Theatre. 212-870-5570.)



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ORCHESTRAS AND CHORUSES

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC
Lorin Maazel begins his second season as music director of America's flagship orchestra in far better shape than he did his first: while there have been some rather willful interpretations now and then, there have also been a number of memorable concerts, and the orchestra's sound has bloomed without any loss of precision or ensemble. For the opening night of the hundred-and-sixty-second season Samuel Ramey brings his granitic basso to a clutch of Verdi arias (from "Simon Boccanegra," "Ernani," and "Don Carlo"), with the orchestra contributing a pair of overtures ("La Forza del Destino" and "Les Vêpres Siciliennes") along with Tchaikovsky's Symphony No. 5. (Sept. 17 at 7:30.) ♦ As with last year's performances of John Adams's "On the Transmigration of Souls," Maazel has again saved the shock of the new for a regular subscription program—in this case the world première of Stephen Hartke's Symphony No. 3. The work, written partly in commemoration of 9/11, calls for the guest participation of the Hilliard Ensemble, renowned for its interpretations of both pre-Romantic and modern vocal music; friends of the composer, they should find themselves at home in both the music's text (a translated Anglo-Saxon elegy describing the ruins of the Roman city at Bath) and its exotically orchestrated sounds. Maazel completes the concert with another great Fifth Symphony, this time by Mahler. (Sept. 18 and Sept. 23 at 7:30 and Sept. 19-20 at 8.) (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656.)

MANHATTAN SCHOOL OF MUSIC CHAMBER SINFONIA
The school's performance season begins with a concert with the composer-conductor Gunther Schuller, who leads a French-leaning program of Rameau, Ibert (the Flute Concerto, with the student soloist Mercedes Smith), Delius, and Mozart (the Symphony No. 40 in G Minor). (Borden Auditorium, Broadway at 122nd St. Sept. 19 at 8. No tickets necessary.)

RECITALS

ZANKEL HALL OPENING FESTIVAL
Sept. 17 at 7:30: The composer-conductor Pierre Boulez, the founder of the Ensemble Intercontemporain, brings the crack new-music group to Zankel Hall for two concerts. The first is an all-Boulez evening that includes the "Notations" for solo piano (with Dimitri Vassilakis) and "Le Marteau sans Maître" (featuring the contralto Hilary Summers), a song cycle on texts by René Char—and the "Rite of Spring" of the nineteen-fifties. ♦ Sept. 18 at 7:30: Boulez returns to lead a concert of Debussy, Bartók (the Sonata for Two Pianos and Percussion), and his own "Sur 'Incises' " for chamber ensemble. ♦ Sept. 19 at 7:30: Ton Koopman conducts the Orchestra of St. Luke's in a concert of vocal and instrumental gems by Handel and Bach (with the countertenor Andreas Scholl). ♦ Sept. 21 at 5: James Levine and his Met Chamber Ensemble offer gemütlich music by Mozart (the "Kegelstatt" Trio) and Brahms (the Serenade No. 2) along with songs by Webern (with Jennifer Welch-Babidge) and Carter (the trenchant Lowell cycle "In Sleep, in Thunder," with Matthew Polenzani). ♦ Sept. 22 at 7:30: David Robertson, another redoubtable modernist, leads Synergy Vocals and the Sacred Voices Ensemble (along with the soprano Susan Gritton and the mezzo-soprano Sarah Connolly) in Pergolesi's "Stabat Mater" and Reich's "Tehillim." ♦ Sept. 23 at 7:30: Peter Serkin joins the Orion String Quartet for a concert mixing quartets by Haydn and Beethoven (the "Serioso") with premières of piano quintets by Alexander Goehr and Peter Lieberson. (Zankel Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800.)

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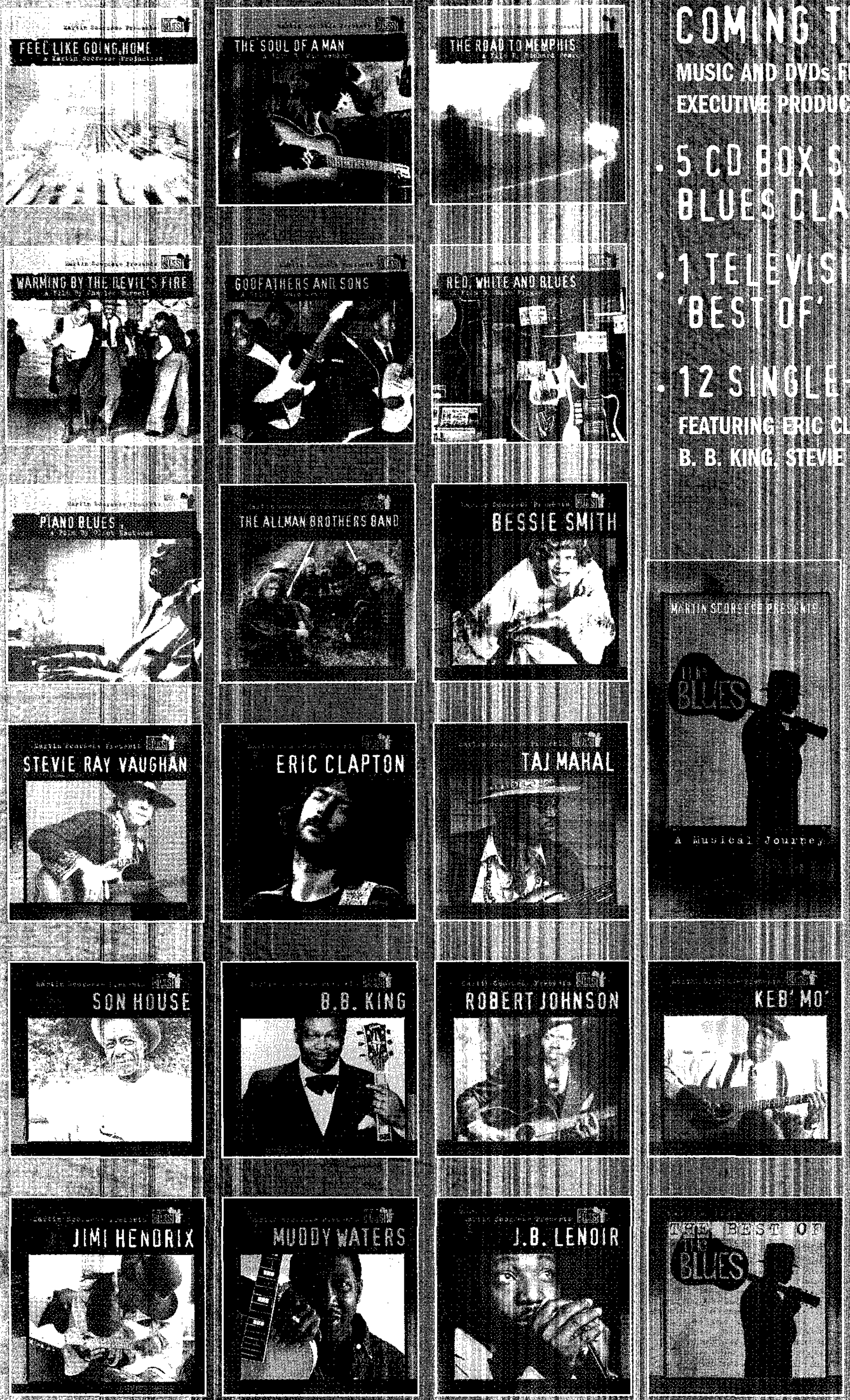
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a stage just big enough for a seven-foot Bösendorfer that's hauled down through the ceiling. The Forum's first concerts of the season are offered by this young piano trio, which harbors an adventurous contemporary spirit along with its devotion to its genre's Austrian masters; the ensemble's three programs combine music by Haydn and Schubert with works by Ivan Eröd, Wolfram Wagner, and other modern Central European composers. (11 E. 52nd St. Sept. 17-19 at 8. To reserve free tickets, which are required, call 212-319-5300, ext. 222.)

BARGEMUSIC

The brothers Jacobsen (Colin on violin, Eric on cello) and the pianist Steven Beck front a roster of young performers who will spend a weekend at the floating chamber-music series exploring the repertory for piano and strings. Sept. 18-19 at 7:30: Favorite works by Mozart and Schubert (the "Trout" Quintet) share the program with music by Pärt and Harbison ("November 19, 1828," a fantastical "Hallucination in Four Episodes" taking place in the mind of the dying Schubert). ♦ Sept. 20 at 7:30 and Sept. 21 at 4: Music by Rossini, Anderson, and Dvořák (the String Quintet with Bass, Op. 77). (Fulton Ferry Landing, Brooklyn. 718-624-2083.)

MILLER THEATRE

George Steel's popular "Composer Portraits" series at the theatre begins its sixth season with a celebration of concerts past and a preview of things to come. Alarm Will Sound, a hip classical ensemble (complete with a few spiky hairdos) founded at the Eastman School of Music, performs a mélange of pieces including Ligeti's clock-inspired Chamber Concerto, John Adams's Chamber Symphony, two complex études from the American rebel Conlon Nancarrow, and a rock-oriented piece by the Bang on a Can impresario Michael Gordon; Alan Pierson conducts. (Columbia University, Broadway at 116th St. 212-854-7799. Sept. 19 at 8.)

JUILLIARD SCHOOL

The school launches its ninety-eighth season of concerts with two ambitious programs. Sept. 19 at 8: The Pink Baby Monster ensemble, a brainchild of the Juilliard faculty member and longtime Metropolitan Opera orchestra trumpeter Mark Gould, presents "Afterlife," a multimedia piece based partly on the strange confluence of art and terrorism in the writings of Karlheinz Stockhausen, whose post-9/11 comment about the terrorist attack got him into a lot of trouble. This catholic piece also draws its inspiration from Wagner, Beckett, and hip-hop and features the virtuoso downtown tubist Marcus Rojas to boot. (Paul Hall. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Sept. 20 at 8: The New Juilliard Ensemble, led by Joel Sachs, gives the American première of a piece by the Danish composer Ole Buck and New York premières of works by Derek Bermel and David Liptak. (Juilliard Theatre, 155 W. 65th St. For free tickets, which are required, call 212-769-7406.)

JOHN DAVIS PLAYS BLIND TOM

The pianist John Davis performs the music and recounts the story of the nineteenth-century pianist and musical savant, a slave who could play two songs at once while singing a third and perform challenging pieces with his back to the piano—in addition to being a composer of talent. (Symphony Space, Broadway at 95th St. 212-864-5400. Sept. 19 at 8:30.)

MORITZBURG CHAMBER MUSIC FESTIVAL

Sept. 20 at 8:30: Thomas Adès, the thirtysomething British institution, may be the most imaginative composer of his generation, but his music still isn't heard very often on this side of the Atlantic—which makes the New York première of the Piano Quintet (featuring the splendid Canadian pianist Louis Lortie) an especially notable event. It is featured on the first of two programs offered by the German chamber-music collective, which also includes two works by Brahms. ♦ Sept. 21 at 2: Works by Beethoven, Schulhoff, and Schubert (the Octet). (Weill Recital Hall, Carnegie Hall. 212-247-7800.)

BROOKLYN FRIENDS OF CHAMBER MUSIC: "TIME FOR THREE"

Two fiddlers and their bassist friend, all recent graduates of the Curtis Institute of Music, offer Bach, bluegrass, klezmer, and more. (Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church, 85 S. Oxford St., Brooklyn. Sept. 21 at 3. Tickets at the door.)

HILLIARD ENSEMBLE: MUSIC BY STEPHEN HARTKE

The New York premières of Hartke's "Tituli" and "Cathedral in the Thrashing Rain" are the highlights of a concert of new and early music by the renowned vocal quartet. (Merkin Concert Hall, 129 W. 67th St. Sept. 21 at 7:30.)

EOS ORCHESTRA

A piano has eighty-eight keys, and the World Financial Center arts program, which began its Winter Garden music series in 1988, has appropriately decided to make the instrument the centerpiece of its fifteenth-year anniversary concerts. Among them is a concert by the Eos Orchestra, under the direction of Jonathan Sheffer, which will accompany the pianists Jorge Luis Prats, Jeremy Denk, and Christopher Guzman in performances of Mozart's Concerto for Three Pianos, Saint-Saëns's "Carnival of the Animals," and Beethoven's Piano Concerto No. 4. (World Financial Center, Battery Park City. Sept. 23 at 7:30. No tickets necessary.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND

NEEDLE PARK

The latest yarns, patterns, tools, and accessories will be on display during Knit-Out & Crochet 2003, an afternoon that also includes fashion shows (for people as well as poodles) and appearances by "yarn doctors," experts who are eager to answer questions about the crafts. (Union Square Park, Broadway at 17th St. Sept. 21 from noon to 5.)

"MANDALA SAND PAINTING: CREATING AN ENLIGHTENED WORLD"

At the Asia Society, Tibetan monks from the Drepung Loseling Monastery are in the midst of creating an intricate five-foot-square sand painting as an offering of peace and healing. Work began last week on Sept. 11; the piece will be dismantled in a public ceremony on Sept. 21 at 4. (725 Park Ave. For more information, call 212-288-6400.)

READINGS

Sept. 17 at 7: Jonathan Lethem celebrates the publication of his new novel, "The Fortress of Solitude," with a reading at St. Ann's Warehouse. (38 Water St., Brooklyn. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Sept. 18 at 7:30: The poets Mark Doty, James Tate, and Monica Youn read from their work. (New School, 66 W. 12th St. 212-254-9628.) ♦ Sept. 22 at 8: Frances Sternhagen and Richard Howard read from the letters of George Sand and Gustave Flaubert at the National Arts Club. (15 Gramercy Park S. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Sept. 23 at 7: The Kitchen starts the second season of its "Necessary Translations" reading series with an evening titled "Literature from the 'Axis of Evil.'" The readers include the novelist Andre Dubus III, the Iranian actress Shohreh Aghdashloo, the Iraqi novelist Najem Wali, and the North Korean-American poet Suji Kwock Kim. (512 W. 19th St. 212-255-5793.)

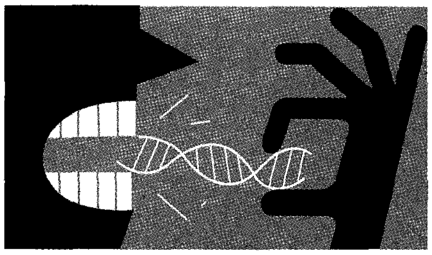
TALKS

Sept. 17 at 7:30: The Scottish sculptor Andy Goldsworthy discusses his first permanent commission in New York City, the Garden of Stones at the Museum of Jewish Heritage. (36 Battery Pl. 212-968-1800.) ♦ Sept. 18 at 7: John Steele Gordon talks about "A Thread Across the Ocean," his account of the laying of the first transatlantic cable. (Melville Gallery, South Street Seaport, 213 Water St. 212-748-8735.) ♦ Sept. 18 at 7: Cathi Hanauer, the editor of "Bitch in the House: 26 Women Tell the Truth About Sex, Solitude, Work, Motherhood, and Marriage," joins the *Times* correspondent Lynette Clemetson and Carrie Fernandez, the coördinator of the Ms. Foundation's Take Our Daughters to Work Day, for a discussion about feminism today. (Sulzberger Parlor, Barnard Hall, Barnard College, Broadway at 117th St. No tickets necessary.) ♦ Sept. 21 at noon: The Dalai Lama gives a free lecture in the East Meadow in Central Park. (Enter at 90th St. and Fifth Ave. For details on the Dalai Lama's full New York City schedule, visit www.dalailamanyc.org.) ♦ Sept. 22 at 8: Mel Gussow interviews the playwright Arthur Miller. (92nd Street Y, Lexington Ave. at 92nd St. 212-415-5500.)

BOOK CURRENTS

Readers Digest

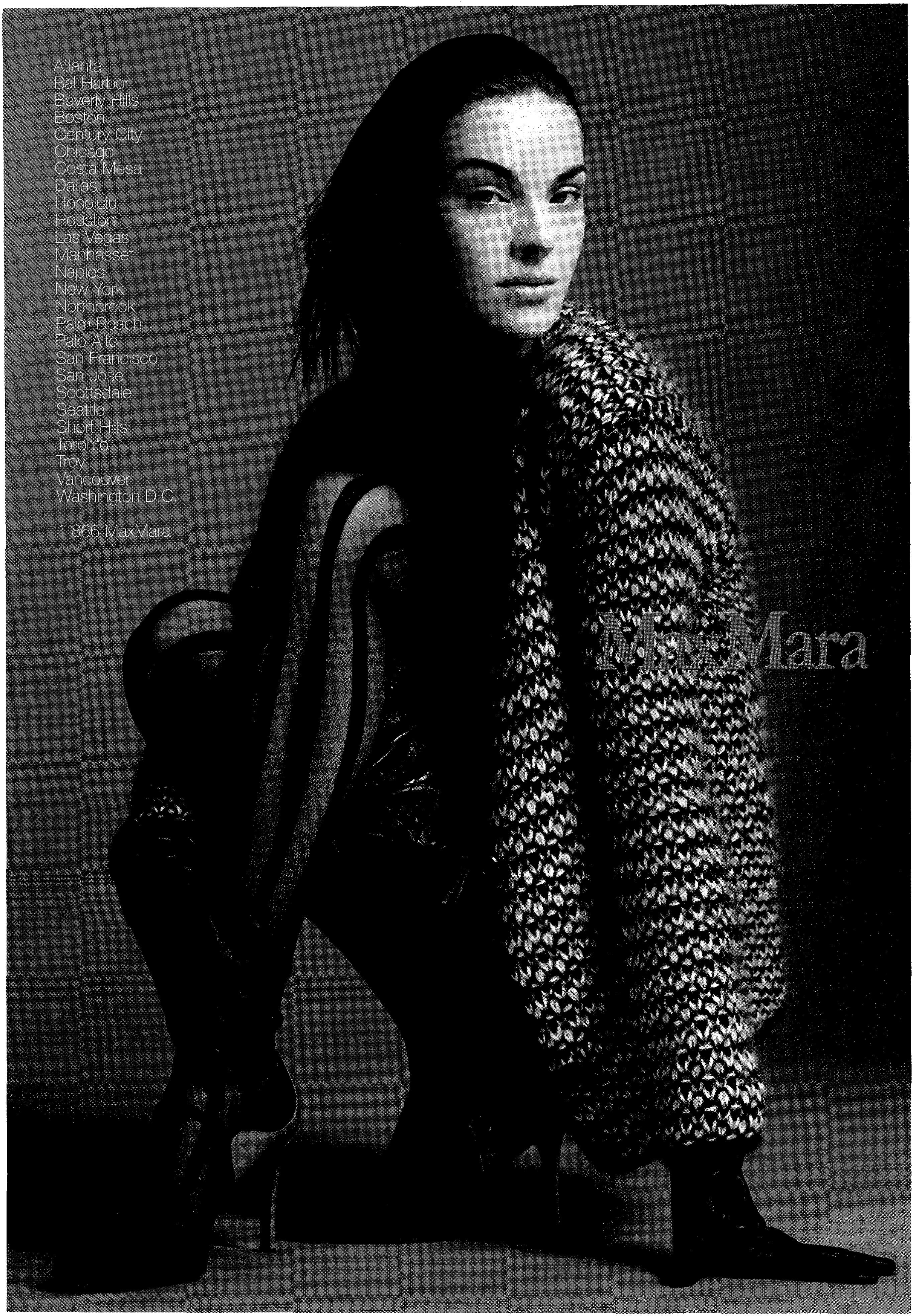
In 1998, just as the battle over genetically modified food was heating up, the Monsanto C.E.O. Robert Shapiro—one of the men who represented O. J. Simpson—was struck in the face by a tofu cream pie hurled by enraged eco-protesters in San Francisco. Shapiro has moved on from Monsanto, the chemical giant that created Agent Orange and that, since the nineteen-eighties, has become a powerhouse in transgenic crop technology—the practice of inserting foreign genes (from, say, fireflies or chicken) into corn, potatoes, and rice. In **FOOD, INC.** (Simon & Schuster), the veteran reporter Peter Pringle offers a refreshingly measured look at this brave new world of "gene guns," Flavr Savr tomatoes, contaminated taco shells, lax regulatory oversight, dwindling crop diversity, rapacious "biopirates," and geneticists toiling in grenade-proof greenhouses (opponents have been known to resort to tougher tactics than tofu pies). It's possible that the pie that hit Shapiro was created from modified soybeans, which are eaten by millions of people every day.



The potential upside of genetically modified foods is huge: making pesticides obsolete, creating huge yields, and ending world hunger. But the opposition from environmentalists and creationists—fuelled by superstition as much as science—has focussed on the potential for disaster, such as new human allergies. Kathleen Hart's **EATING IN THE DARK** (Vintage) is a concerned-citizen approach to the ongoing controversy that cites such respected scientific journals as *Lancet* for support. Whether these so-called "Frankenfoods" lead to a well-fed Utopia or to an ecological Armageddon, the G.M. revolution is, at least, helping to boost sales of organic food.

—Mark Rozzo

RICHARD McGUIRE



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MOVIES OPENING

ANYTHING ELSE
Woody Allen's new romantic comedy is set in New York City and tells the story of a young writer (Jason Biggs) tutored by an older man (Allen) about how to woo his actress girlfriend (Christina Ricci). Opening Sept. 19.

CASA DE LOS BABYS
Six American women travel to South America to adopt children, in a drama written and directed by John Sayles. The cast includes Daryl Hannah, Marcia Gay Harden, Mary Steenburgen, Rita Moreno, Maggie Gyllenhaal, and Susan Lynch. Opening Sept. 19. (First & 62nd Cinemas and Union Square.)

COLD CREEK MANOR
In Mike Figgis's thriller, Sharon Stone and Dennis Quaid play a couple who move to a house in the country, where they discover secrets about the family who lived there before them. With Stephen Dorff. Opening Sept. 19.

DEMONLOVER
A futuristic drama written and directed by Olivier Assayas in which a corporate spy (Connie Nielsen) investigates an interactive torture Web site. Also with Chloë Sevigny, Gina Gershon, and Charles Berling. In French, English, and Japanese. Opening Sept. 19. (Sunshine Cinema.)

THE FIGHTING TEMPTATIONS
An advertising executive (Cuba Gooding, Jr.) returns to his home town in Georgia to start a gospel choir, in a musical comedy directed by Jonathan Lynn. With Beyoncé Knowles. Opening Sept. 19.

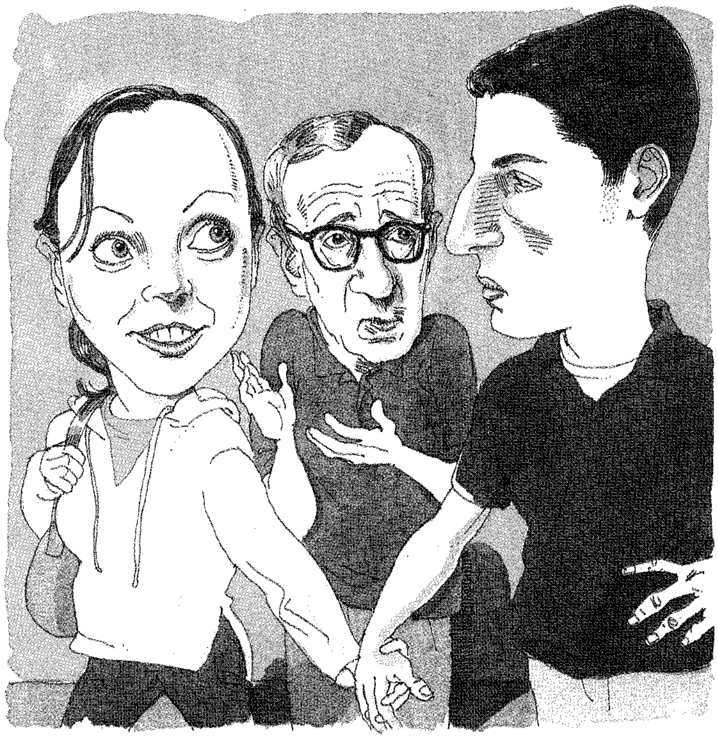
IN THIS WORLD
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening Sept. 19. (34th Street Theatre.)

MAMBO ITALIANO
Émile Gaudreault directed this comedy about an Italian family in Montreal who discover that their grown son (Luke Kirby) is gay. Opening Sept. 19.

SECONDHAND LIONS
A family drama written and directed by Tim McCanlies, about the summer that a fourteen-year-old boy (Haley Joel Osment) spends on a Texas ranch with his eccentric great-uncles (Michael Caine and Robert Duvall). Opening Sept. 19.

TO BE AND TO HAVE
A documentary by Nicolas Philibert that follows the teachers and students in a one-room schoolhouse throughout an entire year. In French. Opening Sept. 19. (Cinema Village and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

UNDERWORLD
In Len Wiseman's gothic action film, a blood feud between vampires and werewolves becomes complicated by love. With Kate Beckinsale and Scott Speedman. Opening Sept. 19.



Christina Ricci, Woody Allen, and Jason Biggs in "Anything Else."

JOE CIARDIELLO

FILM NOTES

AMERICAN SPLENDOR
Well, it's different. Shari Springer Berman and Robert Pulcini, directing together, have made a drama-documentary in which the drama and the documentary look at each other but don't touch. The movie is about Harvey Pekar, a real and rusted-up gentleman from Cleveland. He works as a filing clerk, and his experiences have long been the subject of a comic strip, illustrated by—among others—Robert Crumb. So we get a good dose of Harvey. But we get an even better and funnier dose of Paul Giamatti, who plays an alternative Harvey, and who is framed, or sometimes drawn, in fond imitation of a comic book—the implication being that even the cruddiest lives can, in sympathetic hands, acquire shape and grace. The story, such as it is, moves from Harvey the record collector to Harvey the cancer sufferer to Harvey the chat-show guest. There is terrific supporting work from Hope Davis as Mrs. Pekar and from Judah Friedlander as Harvey's profoundly unusual friend Toby. Mild fame may have patronized these folks, but the movie pays them a comic homage that feels flattering, fast-witted, and true.—*Anthony Lane* (Reviewed in our issue of 8/18 & 25/03.) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Battery Park 16, East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, and Sunshine Cinema.)

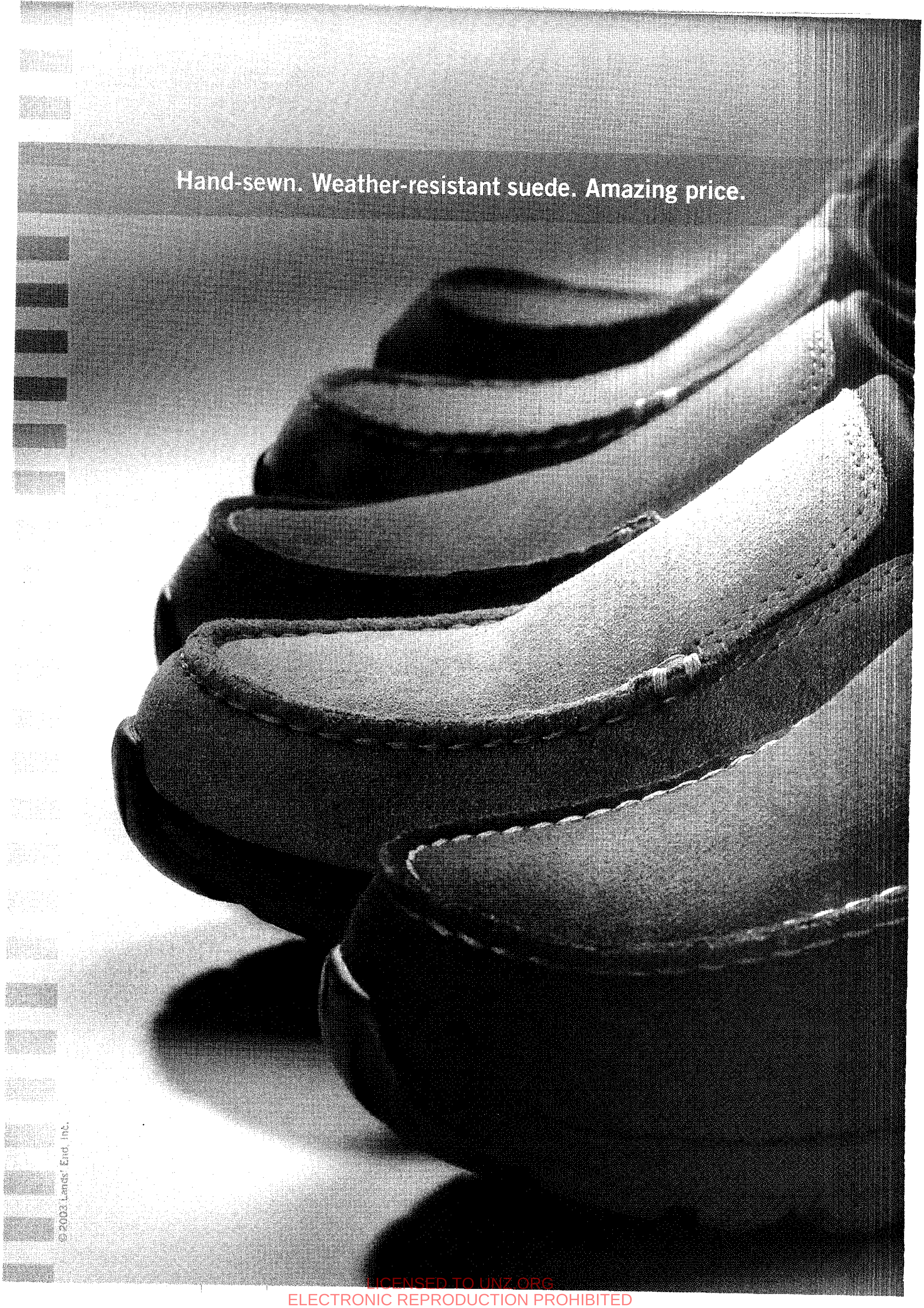
THE BATTLE OF SHAKER HEIGHTS
Not as bad as you might think, considering the infighting captured on "Project Greenlight 2," the television show that chronicled the making of this movie. Throughout the series, the tag-team directors Kyle Rankin and Efram Potelle locked horns with the producer Chris Moore about whether the film should make 'em laugh or make 'em cry. Moore dropped vague comments like "I'm worried about the melodrama," while Rankin and Potelle huddled around the camera like twins lost in their own language. In the film itself, Shia LaBeouf is the young star and the hero, and he's very good at acting raw and confused—imagine a Mark Ruffalo, Jr. He also gets off a few good lines, but the coming-of-age story feels so jumbled up and patched together that it never acquires any emotional coherence. Then there are the little things, like the palm trees that grow in Ohio. But if you saw the show you probably have to see the movie, so think of your ticket price as a donation for "Project Greenlight 3."—*Michael Agger* (Empire 25, Lincoln Square, and Union Square.)

CAMP
A coming-of-age story about a group of Sondheim-loving teens at a performing-arts camp. The writer-director Todd Graff's frothy opening sequence promises a lighthearted ride, but the film soon bogs down in self-help blather. Still, the actors give the low-budget musical numbers a humble allure. There's not a Ruben or a Clay in sight.—*Bruce Diones* (Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, and Quad Cinema.)

DIRTY PRETTY THINGS
Okwe (Chiwetel Ejiofor), the African-in-exile hero of Stephen Frears's extraordinary London thriller, drives a cab during the day and works as a desk clerk in a good hotel at night; he keeps himself awake by chewing on some sort of African root. Like Travis Bickle, Robert De Niro's overstimulated psycho in "Taxi Driver," Okwe never really sleeps; unlike Bickle, Okwe is a good man, even a fanatically good man. In four or five frantic days, he tries to save another illegal immigrant, Senay (Audrey Tautou), from the clutches of the cheerfully sinister manager of the hotel in which they both work. Señor Juan (Sergi Lopez), as he's known, offers forged passports to illegals in return for a kidney or some other organ that he can sell on the black market. There are a few grisly scenes in the elegant upper rooms of the hotel, but "Dirty Pretty Things" is not a violent thriller. It might be called a social thriller—a tightly knit suspense film that reveals more of the lives of immigrants in London than the most scrupulously earnest documentaries. The great cinematographer Chris Menges keeps the images cool and crisp. There's no murk, no "atmosphere." However harried, Okwe, a great chess player, has to see every move in advance as he defends himself and his friends from the treachery on all sides.—*David Denby* (9/15/03) (BAM Rose Cinemas, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 2, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, and Sunshine Cinema.)

LE DIVORCE
A Merchant-Ivory movie set in the present, which makes for a change. This one is the tale of two sisters: Isabel (Kate Hudson), who flies to Paris to visit her sister Roxy (Naomi Watts), who has married a dodgy Frenchman. Cue any number of cross-cultural collisions, as our hopeful young Americans—today's Daisy Millers—become ensnared in the oily grasp of old Europe. Isabel finds herself in bed with Edgar (Thierry Lhermitte), who has the decency to look faintly embarrassed about it. The movie contemplates sex, as well as abortion, suicide, and mental instability, but the director, James Ivory, seems fatally undecided as to whether such matters are worthy of solemn consideration or mere backdrops to a bit of fun. The moral of the piece, finally, appears to be "Don't marry out of your tribe," which is nice to know in these days of international suspicion. Wasted actors include Stockard Channing, Sam Waterston, Bebe Neuwirth, Glenn Close, and Matthew Modine; that's a lot of waste. Leslie Caron offers as pure a definition of grande dame as you are likely to find.—*A.L.* (8/18 & 25/03) (Paris and Union Square.)

FREAKY FRIDAY
The beloved Disney teen movie from 1976 gets a power-pop makeover. As in the original, mother and daughter magically switch bodies, and the best parts are when they put each other's lives through the paces. The saucer-eyed Lindsay Lohan, as the daughter, morphs from a slouching rocker into a perfect-posture girl, a Junior League aspirant set loose in high school. Jamie Lee Curtis has the more difficult assignment, contorting her adult body into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the ungainly angles of adolescence. She pulls off the transformation with precision, and both she and Lohan grace their scenes with moments of dead-on physical parody. Together, they provide a delightful double take on the old mother-to-daughter mantra: Act your age.—*M.A.* (East 86th Street Cinemas, Empire 25, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 34th Street Theatre, and Village East Cinemas.)

LOST IN TRANSLATION

Nothing much happens in the new film by the writer-director Sofia Coppola, but she has first-rate abilities as an observer and as a rueful comedian, and much of the movie is sweetly funny and satisfying. In Tokyo, a burned-out American movie star named Bob Harris (Bill Murray) shows up to appear in a whiskey ad. Stranded in a sleekly pompous modern hotel, he can't connect with anything or even sleep, but he does hook up (chastely) with a very young woman, Charlotte (Scarlett Johansson), whose fashion-photographer husband (Giovanni Ribisi) is rapidly slipping away from her. Both Bob and Charlotte are in emotional limbo, and they become an odd, inappropriate couple. Murray has never been this quiet, this wary, this subtly acid before—or this warm, either. The drama of the movie, such as it is, lies in seeing just how much he will respond and when.—*D.D.* (9/15/03) (Chelsea Cinemas, Lincoln Square, 72nd Street East, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE MAGDALENE SISTERS

A scalding new picture from Peter Mullan, set in Ireland in the nineteen-sixties. Three girls are sent to a Magdalene Asylum—one of a network of institutions to which wayward young women were consigned by their disapproving families. The asylums were run by Roman Catholic nuns; in this case, the presiding spirit is Sister Bridget (Geraldine McEwan), who counts her money in secret and speaks to her charges with a forked tongue. Finally, the trio of friends—played by Anne-Marie Duff, Dorothy Duffy, and Nora-Jane Noone—make their escape, as if from a prisoner-of-war camp. The system was certainly crushing, but it has inspired Mullan—a fine actor, whose previous film as director, "Orphans," was a scabrous Glaswegian comedy—to deliver his most intemperate work, which lashes out at the Catholic Church with the same hardness of heart that Sister Bridget and her colleagues display in their running of the asylum. You come away from the movie not just convinced but cowed.—*A.L.* (8/11/03) (Chelsea West, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Sutton 1 and 2, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE

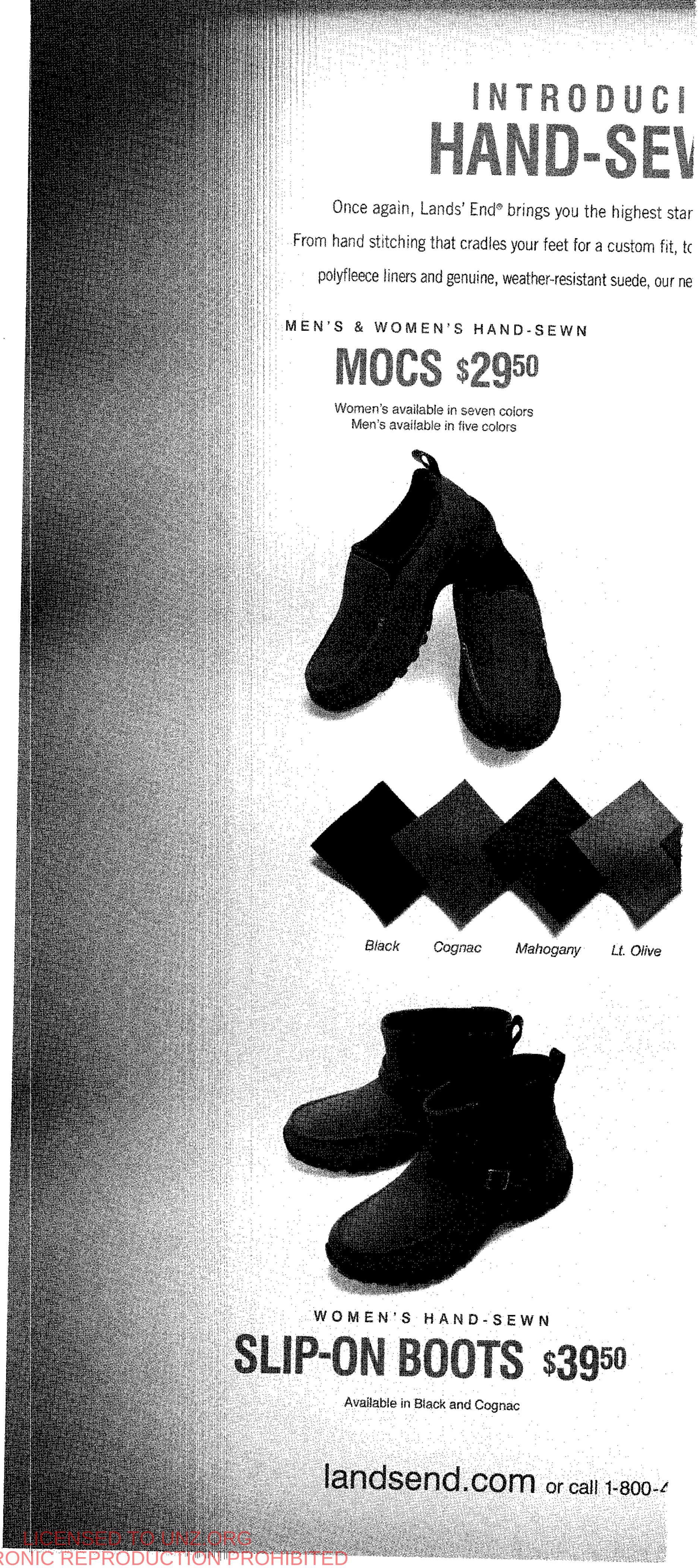
Although some quarters greeted it as a crazy misfire back in 1962, this robust, witty modern classic, derived from Richard Condon's first-rate novel, continues to expand viewers' perceptions and maybe blow their minds with its terrifying playfulness. Fundamentally, of course, the movie is the trident-shaped tale of a returning Korean War hero (Laurence Harvey), the ambitious mother (Angela Lansbury) who politically exploits him, and the former comrade-in-arms (Frank Sinatra) who senses that there's something off about him. The director, John Frankenheimer, brilliantly depicts genuine political malevolence within the framework of a tricky, satire-streaked melodrama. He augments Condon's audacious jabs at conservatives, liberals, Communists, mother love, and media politics with his own craft and savvy. He conjures the electric context in which we can fully appreciate Lansbury's telling her McCarthyite senator husband (James Gregory), "You just keep shouting 'point of order,' 'point of order' into the television cameras, and I'll take care of the rest." Reassuring clichés (like a standard newsreel narrator) set off unsettling executions as well as splashes of surrealism—such as the unforgettable image of a young woman (Leslie Parrish) draped in a Queen of Diamonds costume. George Axelrod did the bang-up script.—*Michael Sragow* (Film Forum; Sept. 19-21.)

MATCHSTICK MEN

Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. (Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, Cinema 1, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Metro Twin, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

OPEN RANGE

A slow-moving, traditional Western shot in the high, green valleys of the Canadian Rockies, a darkly



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beautiful landscape that unfurls across the screen like velvet. Robert Duvall and Kevin Costner are "freegrazers"—cattlemen who roam through the land with their herds—and Michael Gambon is the viciously corrupt big landowner who wants to exterminate them. There's nothing terribly striking about the film, but in a time of hyperkinetic spectacle, the lethargy of "Open Range" is almost soothing. With Annette Bening as the voice of civilization—a doctor's assistant waiting for a man.—*D.D.* (9/1/03) (Battery Park 16, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, and Village Theatre VII.)

PARTY MONSTER

A superficial and murky tale about the Manhattan party promoter and club-kid king Michael Alig, whose notoriety stems from his participation in the killing of a drug-dealing pal. The co-directors Fenton Bailey and Randy Barbato attempt a fevered glimpse of the trippy drug-saturated parties and the fabulous characters who created them, but their film adds up to little more than a series of lacklustre re-creations. And although the clubbing costumes are a hoot Macaulay Culkin, in the lead role, lacks the childish whimsy that made Alig's crime such a disturbing moment in New York night life. Only Seth Green, who plays Alig's mentor, James St. James, provides the narcissistic chirpiness that made club land so exotically self-destructive.—*B.D.* (Angelika Film Center, Chelsea Cinemas, and Lincoln Square.)

PIRATES OF THE CARIBBEAN: THE CURSE OF THE BLACK PEARL

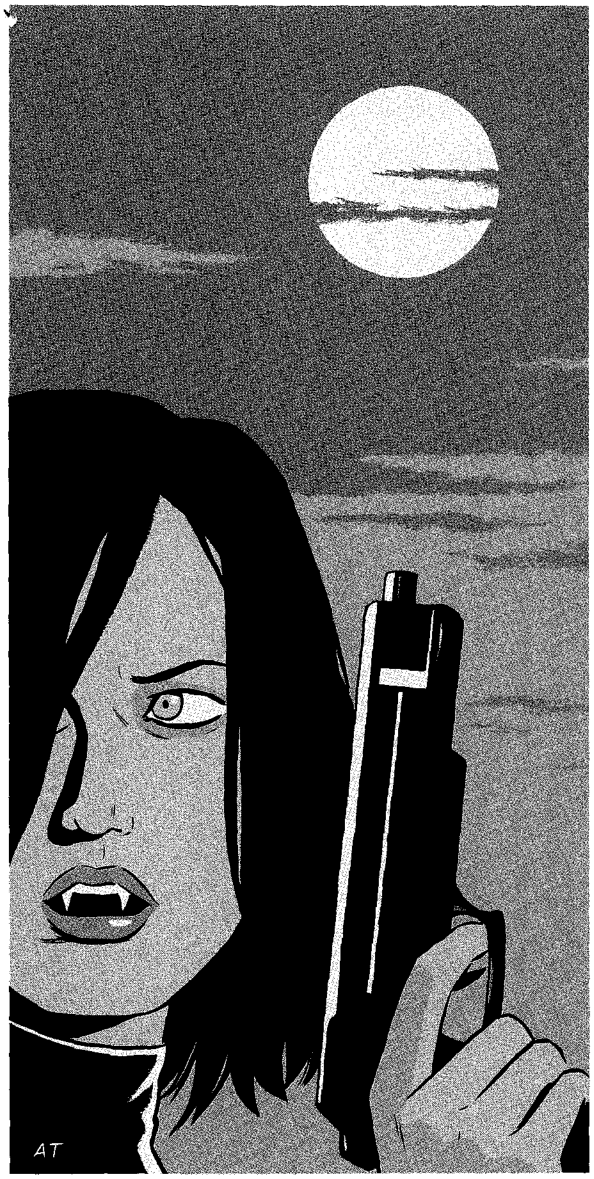
As the pirate captain Jack Sparrow, Johnny Depp does not so much walk as sashay into a scene, and he wears more eyeshadow than Tammy Faye Bakker. He gives this exuberant family entertainment an amiable sheen of silliness (the performance offers diverse echoes of W. C. Fields, Toshiro Mifune, and Keith Richards on a bender). Depp leaves a lot of the duelling and all of the lovemaking to Orlando Bloom (from "The Lord of the Rings"), who plays a young blacksmith with pirate blood in his veins, a fellow much loved by the daughter of the British governor of a Caribbean colony, Keira Knightley (she has a thing for swashbucklers). The movie is based on the famous old Disneyland ride, and it's good, cheesy fun, complete with tall ships, battles at sea, and accursed pirates who turn into skeletons in moonlight. As Barbossa, the pirate who deposed Captain Jack, Geoffrey Rush eyeballs his victims and stretches out his syllables in the taunting manner of Robert Newton, who specialized in stump-legged scoundrels fifty years ago.—*D.D.* (7/28/03) (Battery Park 16, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, New York Twin, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.)

SEABISCUIT

Gary Ross's adaptation of Laura Hillenbrand's 2001 best-seller about the miraculous racehorse of the nineteen-thirties has been shaped as a national epic—not as a good story but as *the* good story. The horse, knobby-kneed and perverse, comes from behind and knocks off the more famous Thoroughbreds of the era. He is saved from obscurity by an unlikely trio: Charles Howard (Jeff Bridges), a millionaire auto salesman with a venturesome streak; Tom Smith (Chris Cooper), a down-and-out trainer, practically a relic of the nineteenth century; and Johnny (Red) Pollard (Tobey Maguire), an embittered, not terribly talented boxer and jockey. The horse becomes such a popular favorite that, as Hillenbrand and Ross tell it, he redeems the millions of unemployed "forgotten men" in the Depression. In case we don't get the point, there are solemn interludes of photomontage accompanied by narration from the historian David McCullough. The Oscar-hungry movie stamps itself with a seal of approval rather than simply telling its story. Much of it, however, is beautifully made in conservative-humanist style, and the races are thrilling. With William H. Macy in a great bit as a poetizing radio announcer.—*D.D.* (8/4/03) (Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 34th Street Theatre, and Village Theatre VII.)

THE SECRET LIVES OF DENTISTS

In Alan Rudolph's marital drama, a suburban dentist (Campbell Scott) who shares his practice with his wife (Hope Davis) suspects her of having an affair. Scott's character is a model of repression—he doesn't want to know anything about his wife's infidelity that would cause him to act—and the film plays out as a maddening rush of imagined scenarios (the writer Craig Lucas invests his script with more than a few comic moments to goose the inaction along). The outstanding performances of the two leads do much to tether Rudolph's loose style. The film is steeped in a queasy emotional containment that nails the experience of true domestic dread.—*B.D.* (Angelika Film Center, Lincoln Square, and 72nd Street East.)



Kate Beckinsale in "Underworld," opening September 19.

SWIMMING POOL

Charlotte Rampling gives another outstanding performance, this time as an uptight mystery writer who accepts an offer from her publisher to use his house in the South of France for some inspiration. When his sexy daughter (the luscious Ludivine Sagnier) shows up uninvited, a slow-burning and deliberately abstract mystery is set in motion. The director François Ozon (who's worked with Rampling before, in the very similar "Under the Sand") crafts a seductive puzzle that may have audiences wondering, in a pleasant way, what it was that they just saw. In French and English.—*B.D.* (Empire 25, First & 62nd Cinemas, Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, 19th Street East 6, and Sunshine Cinema.)

TAKING SIDES

After the Second World War, the German conductor Wilhelm Furtwängler (played, though not impersonated, by Stellan Skarsgård) is questioned at length by Steve Arnold (Harvey Keitel), an American major, whose task is to "find him guilty." Furtwängler had stayed in place through the rise and fall of the Nazi regime, leading the Berlin and Vienna Philharmonic Orchestras in concerts that were not just sanctioned but encouraged. Even now, listeners are forced to wonder what role Furtwängler fulfilled for Hitler: lackey, dupe, or cultural front man? In the movie, he defends himself as a subtle resister; the screenwriter, Ronald Harwood, and the director, István Szabó, set up a hot, claustrophobic head-to-head between the accuser and the accused. The result is so conscious of its contribution to the moral debate that it forgets to wake up as a movie, and the shots of a ruined Berlin are a perfunctory joke. Keitel is an annoying presence, but maybe that's the point: Arnold is a brute, a bigot, and a philistine, but, when it comes to the sins of the maestro, he's right.—*A.L.* (9/8/03) (BAM Rose Cinemas and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

THIRTEEN

Evan Rachel Wood is Trace, a Los Angeles junior-high-schooler going nuts from being thirteen. Nikki Reed is Evie, the fast, knowing, cat-eyed girl Trace develops a crush on. The two cruise the shops on Melrose Avenue, buying or stealing what they need, and they dress for school like baby whores. This sensational (in both senses) independent feature, directed by the former set designer Catherine Hardwicke and shot by ace cameraman Elliot Davis, is an emotionally coherent work about incoherent longing—the girls abuse themselves and others and run from one extreme emotion to another. The movie is so absorbing and intelligent that you don't feel repelled by the destructiveness of what they do. With Holly Hunter in a brave performance as Mel, Trace's forty-fiveish mother, who is herself a kind of teenager. Nikki Reed poured a lot of her own disasters into the script, which was written in collaboration with Hardwicke.—*D.D.* (9/1/03) (Beekman, Empire 25, 19th Street East 6, 62nd & Broadway, and Sunshine Cinema.)

TOUCHEZ PAS AU GRISBI

Jacques Becker's 1953 portrait of a stylish middle-aged thief named Max (the incomparable Jean Gabin) set the standard for the French underworld crime capers to follow, yet it retains a mellow kick all its own. Subplots slide away fluidly, like the skin of a cocktail onion; the picture starts *after* Max has made what he hopes will be his last big score. What's crucial proves to be his friendship with his longtime partner, Riton (René Dary), whose inability to age gracefully or to handle an unsatisfied mistress (the young Jeanne Moreau) puts their giant stash at risk. The movie overflows with comic, melancholy ruminations on mortality and sexual fatigue. When Max invites Riton to a swank secret apartment and lays out their plans along with wine and pâté, the sequence plays like a troubled honeymoon for a platonic

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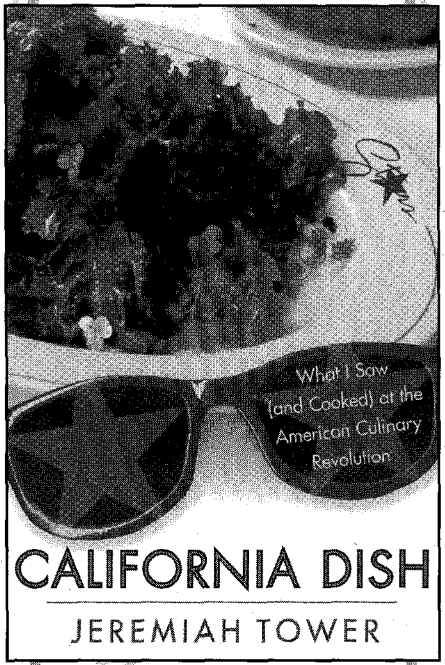

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male marriage. Yet the movie never falls into macho camp. The action is just as vicious as it has to be, and Becker pulls off one tough-guy surprise after another with masterly soft-shoe storytelling. Best of all, Gabin's performance is more than a star turn. He reveals how hard it is for a gangster to keep up a "class act." The co-stars include Lino Ventura in his film début as Max's nemesis; Jean Weiner's music does for the harmonica what the score for "The Third Man" did for the zither. In French.—*M.S.* (Film Forum; Sept. 17-23.)

ALSO PLAYING

CAPTURING THE FRIEDMANS (6/2/03)
Village East Cinemas.
THE ITALIAN JOB (6/16/03)
Battery Park 16, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, Union Square, and Village Theatre VII.
ONCE UPON A TIME IN MEXICO
Battery Park 16, Chelsea Cinemas, 42nd Street E Walk, Kips Bay Theatre, Lincoln Square, Orpheum VII, 64th and 2nd, 34th Street Theatre, and Union Square.

THEATRE ADDRESSES

Unless noted, call 212-777-FILM for show times.

Angelika Film Center, 18 W. Houston St.
Astor Plaza, 44th St. at Broadway.
Battery Park 16, West St. at Vesey St.
Beekman, Second Ave. at 66th St.
Chelsea Cinemas, 260 W. 23rd St.
Chelsea West, 333 W. 23rd St.
Cinemas 1, 2, and 3, Third Ave. at 60th St.
Cinema Village, 22 E. 12th St. (212-924-3363).
East 86th Street Cinemas, Third Ave. at 86th St.
84th Street Sixplex, Broadway at 84th St.
Empire 25, on 42nd St. near Eighth Ave. (212-398-3939).
59th Street East Cinema, 239 E. 59th St.
First & 62nd Cinemas, 400 E. 62nd St.
42nd Street E Walk, 42nd St. near Eighth Ave.
Kips Bay Theatre, Second Ave. at 32nd St.
Lincoln Plaza Cinemas, Broadway at 63rd St. (212-757-2280).
Lincoln Square, Broadway at 68th St.
New York Twin, Second Ave. at 66th St.
19th Street East 6, Broadway at 19th St.
Orpheum VII, Third Ave. at 86th St.
Paris, 4 W. 58th St. (212-688-3800).
Quad Cinema, 34 W. 13th St.
72nd Street East, Third Ave. at 71st St.
64th and 2nd, Second Ave. at 64th St.
62nd & Broadway, 62 W. 62nd St.
Sunshine Cinema, 139-143 E. Houston St.
Sutton 1 and 2, Third Ave. at 57th St.
34th Street Theatre, 312 W. 34th St.
Union Square, Broadway at 13th St.
Village East Cinemas, Second Ave. at 12th St.
Village Theatre VII, Third Ave. at 11th St.
Ziegfeld, 141 W. 54th St.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

AMERICAN MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE
35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—Through Sept. 28: "From the Dream Life: American Movies and the Mythology of the 1960s." Sept. 20 at 2: "Maidstone" (1970, Norman Mailer). ♦ Sept. 20 at 4:45: "Medium Cool" (1969, Haskell Wexler). ♦ Sept. 21 at 2: "Easy Rider" (1969, Dennis Hopper). ♦ Sept. 21 at 4: "Tell Them Willie Boy Is Here" (1969, Abraham Polonsky). ♦ Repertory nights. Sept. 19 at 7:30 and Sept. 20-21 at 6:30: "Kings of the Road" (1976, Wim Wenders; in German).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS
30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-777-3456)—Sept. 17-18 at 4:30 and 9:10: "Warrior of Light" (2001, Monika Treut; in German). ♦ Sept. 17 at 6:50: "Rosarigasinos Argentina" (2001, Rodrigo Grande; in Spanish). ♦ Selections from the Pordenone Silent Film Festival. All screenings will be accompanied by live music. Sept. 18 at 7: "Once Upon a Time" (1922, Carl Theodore Dreyer). ♦ Sept. 19 at 7:30: "Treasures from a Chest," a program of early silent films recently discovered in a French farmhouse. ♦ Sept. 20 at 5: "Where Does the Music Come From?," a presentation by the silent-film historian and musician Neil Brand. ♦ Sept. 20 at 7: Shorts by D. W. Griffith. ♦ Sept. 20 at 9: "Exit Smiling" (1926, Sam Taylor). ♦ Sept. 21 at 5: "Ladies Night in a Turkish Bath" (1928, Edward Cline). ♦ Sept. 21 at 7: "The Grand Duchess and the Waiter" (1926, Malcolm St. Clair). ♦ "Laura Betti's Pasolini." Sept. 22 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:10: "Teorama" (1968, Pier Paolo Pasolini; in Italian). ♦ Sept. 23 at 7: "Pier Paolo Pasolini and the Reason of a Dream" (2002, Betti).

FILM FORUM
W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—Sept. 17-23 at 1:30, 3:25, 5:30, 7:25, and 9:20: "Touchez Pas au Grisbi" (†). ♦ Starting Sept. 19: A John Frankenheimer retrospective. All films are new prints. Sept. 19-21 at 2, 4:30, 7, and 9:30: "The Manchurian Candidate" (†). ♦ Sept. 22 at 1, 3:45, 6:30, and 9:15: "Birdman of Alcatraz" (1962). ♦ Sept. 23 at 1, 3:10, 5:20, 7:30, and 9:40: "All Fall Down" (1962).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL
55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—The films of the actress Jane Birkin. Sept. 23 at 12:30, 3:30, 6:30, and 9: "Daddy Nostalgia" (1990, Bertrand Tavernier; in French).

GRAMERCY THEATRE
127 E. 23rd St. (212-777-4900)—Through Oct. 17: "John Mills: Forever English," a twenty-three-film retrospective of the actor's work. Sept. 18 at 2: "In Which We Serve" (1942, Noël Coward). ♦ Sept. 18 at 4:30: "The Midshipmaid" (1932, Albert de Courville). ♦ Sept. 19 at 2: "Hobson's Choice" (1954, David Lean). ♦ Sept. 19 at 4:30: "Great Expectations" (1946, Lean). ♦ Sept. 20 at 1: "We Dive at Dawn" (1943, Anthony Asquith). ♦ Sept. 21 at 1: "Tunes of Glory" (1960, Ronald Neame). ♦ Sept. 22 at 6: "The Way to the Stars" (1945, Asquith). ♦ Sept. 22 at 8: "This Happy Breed" (1944, Lean). ♦ Sept. 18-21: An Olivier Assayas retrospective. All films are in French unless otherwise noted. Sept. 18 at 6:30: "Les Destinées" (2000). ♦ Sept. 19 at 6:45: "Winter's Child" (1989). ♦ Sept. 19 at 8:30: "A New Life" (1993). ♦ Sept. 20 at 4: "HHH: A Portrait of Hou Hsiao-hsien" (1997). ♦ Sept. 20 at 6: "Flowers of Shanghai" (1998, Hou Hsiao-hsien; in Mandarin). ♦ Sept. 20 at 8:30: "Late August, Early September" (1998). ♦ Sept. 21 at 3: "Paris Awakens" (1991). ♦ Sept. 21 at 5: "Cold Water" (1994). ♦ Sept. 21 at 6:45: "Irma Vep" (1996).

SUNSHINE CINEMA
139-143 E. Houston St. (212-358-0573)—Midnight movies. Sept. 19-20: "Mean Streets" (1973, Martin Scorsese).

WALTER READE THEATRE
Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Through Sept. 28: "Latinbeat 2003," a survey of recent films from Latin America. All films are in Spanish unless otherwise noted. Sept. 17 at 3:45 and 9:30 and Sept. 18 at 1: "Saturday" (2002, Juan Villegas). ♦ Sept. 18 at 2:45 and Sept. 21 at 2: "Autumn Sun" (1996, Eduardo Mignona). ♦ Sept. 19 at 3 and 9:15 and Sept. 22 at 9: "Loco Fever" (2001, Andrés Wood). ♦ Sept. 19-20 at 5: "A Red Bear" (2002, Israel Adrián Caetano). ♦ Sept. 19 at 7 and Sept. 22 at 3: "I, the Worst of All" (1990, Maria Luisa Bemberg). ♦ Sept. 20 at 1 and Sept. 23 at 3: "Momentos" (1981, Bemberg). ♦ Sept. 20 at 3: "The Last Train" (2002, Diego Arzuaga). ♦ Sept. 20 at 7 and Sept. 21 at 4:15: "Alex Lora, Rock 'n' Roll Slave" (2002, Luis Kelly). ♦ Sept. 20 at 9:30 and Sept. 23 at 1 and 8:30: "Red Passport" (2003, Albert Xavier). ♦ Sept. 21 at 7: "To the Left of the Father" (2001, Luiz Fernando Carvalho; in Portuguese). ♦ Sept. 22 at 1: "The Archangel's Feather" (2002, Luis Manzo).

FABRICA

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GAINING MOMENTUM

THE FIGHT AGAINST BREAST CANCER: NEW TECHNIQUE ON THE FAST TRACK

Breast cancer, a disease that most women fear more than any other, is gradually yielding its deadly secrets to scientists. New laboratory tests, still in the research stage, may be able to predict which breast tumors are truly life-threatening and which are not—an advance that could spare many women the rigors of chemotherapy. Traditional treatments for breast cancer are becoming less invasive, and sometimes less lengthy or less toxic.

And there is more good news. According to Cancer Facts & Figures 2003, a report by the American Cancer Society (ACS), the mortality rate for breast cancer has been slowly but steadily falling by more than three per cent a year, a sign that more aggressive detection and treatment may be paying off.

> "THERE'S A REVOLUTION BREWING IN THE DIAGNOSIS OF CANCER."

However, the incidence of breast cancer (the number of new cases diagnosed every year) is still troubling and continues to rise for women over fifty. Michael Thun, who heads epidemiological research at ACS, says that risk factors associated with the increased incidence in older women are menopausal hormone therapy, weight gain (fat creates estrogen), alcohol consumption, and the change in reproductive patterns (bearing children later rather than earlier in life).

But for those who receive a diagnosis of breast cancer, treatments today are not quite so draconian as they used to be, thanks to new drugs to control nausea and boost the immune system. Novel radiation techniques are curtailing the time spent in treatment, and new chemotherapy regimens are improving outcomes. Even more importantly, scientists' knowledge of how genes go awry in tumors is advancing at a rapid pace.

Indeed, there's a revolution brewing in the diagnosis of cancer that could dramatically change how doctors determine which tumors are life threatening, and which aren't. A new technique, called "gene profiling," has just become accessible in the Netherlands and may soon be available in the U.S.

With gene profiling—also known as genetic fingerprinting or finding molecular signatures—the idea is to identify which genes are expressed or "turned on" in a given tumor. Scientists want to know if the tumor has characteristics that make metastasis (a spreading of the cancer to other parts of the body) a likely outcome, or if there's a low probability that this will occur.

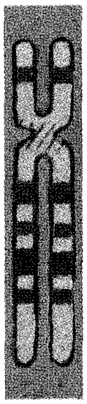
To profile genes, scientists use commercially available DNA microarrays or "gene chips"—thin, one-inch-square plates of glass covered with thousands of tiny bits of DNA,

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JEAN-CLAUDE GÖTTING

By Judy Foreman

each representing a single human gene. Genetic material called mRNA is taken from a patient's tumor and spread on the DNA. If the mRNA finds its match on a spot of DNA, it sticks, and, because it's been pretreated, it fluoresces under a special laser light. This technique—at roughly a thousand dollars a test—tells researchers which genes are active or "expressed" in that particular tumor.

Once a tumor is genetically analyzed, the patient can then be categorized as having a good prognosis or a bad one, or falling somewhere in between. Various teams of researchers have been studying gene-expression patterns with encouraging results. Several years ago, Charles Perou (now an assistant professor of genetics at the University of North Carolina) was able—in collaboration with Stanford's David Botstein and Patrick Brown—to find a set of four hundred and fifty genes that, in various combinations, could predict outcomes for four or five different types of breast cancer. Perou's team discovered, in effect, that many different cancers can be located in breast tissue. "Each needs a different therapy," says Perou. "For some subtypes we know the therapy and for others we don't."



Two years ago in the Netherlands, Rene Bernards, Marc J. van de Vijver, and Laura van T. Veer, along with other colleagues and in collaboration with Rosetta Inpharmatics, identified a set of seventy genes that can reliably predict which breast tumors will metastasize. And last year, at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston, Dr. Sridhar Ramaswamy, along with a team of colleagues from Dana-Farber and the Whitehead Institute at M.I.T., found a unique set of seventeen genes that appears to be a harbinger of poor prognoses in various forms of cancer.

"IF GENE PROFILING LIVES UP TO ITS PROMISE, IT MAY RADICALLY ALTER TREATMENT OPTIONS FOR WOMEN."

Developments are moving along at a rapid pace. Researchers from Duke and the Koo Foundation Sun Yat-sen Cancer Center in Taipei, Taiwan, reported in May that gene expression patterns from tumor samples could predict with about ninety per cent accuracy whether a woman's cancer would recur within three years. The researchers were also able to determine, solely from gene expression patterns, the likelihood that cancer cells had spread to the lymph nodes. According to Duke's Erich Huang (first author of the report), recurrence and lymph-node involvement are controlled by different patterns of genes, suggesting that different biological processes may underlie the two characteristics.

Gene profiling may also help physicians choose from among different treatment options. In a study presented at the American Society of Clinical Oncology (ASCO) in May, researchers reported that a set of key genetic markers could predict with seventy-five per cent accuracy whether Taxol followed by a three-drug chemotherapy combination would completely eradicate tumor cells in early-stage breast cancer patients.

In June, Howard Hughes Medical Institute researchers announced that they had found a "metastatic toolbox" of genes that is necessary for breast cancer to spread to the bone marrow. These genes differ from those that allow the cancer to grow in the first place, and they are also distinguished from genes previously identified as part of the "poor prognosis" signature. Elsewhere, researchers are finding molecular signatures that can predict outcomes for other cancers—kidney, lung, prostate, and even some leukemias.

Doctors once believed that all tumors started off benign and then, at a later stage, mutated and acquired the ability to metastasize. "Our study shows that this notion, at least for breast cancer, is wrong," says Bernards, head of the division of molecular carcinogenesis at the Netherlands Cancer Institute. "Small does not necessarily mean benign. We have seen small tumors that have poor outcomes and we have seen large tumors that have a good prognosis."

If buttressed by further research, gene profiling will initially be used to supplement the diagnostic tests doctors already employ, such as determining the size and stage of tumors and whether or not the cancer has spread to lymph nodes. But one hope is that genetic profiling may eventually replace lymph-node evaluation, thereby sparing patients the invasive and uncomfortable lymph-node excisions that are currently part of the diagnostic process.

When it becomes widely available, gene profiling is certain to dramatically influence the way breast cancer is identified and treated. As things stand now, particularly with early-stage breast cancer, doctors tend to vastly overtreat all tumors because they can't tell which ones will become problematic and which ones won't. "We are treating a hundred women to help twenty, and, in some situations, we may be treating a hundred to help one," estimates Dr. Eric Winer, director of the breast oncology center at Dana-Farber Cancer Institute in Boston. Dr. Matthew Ellis, clinical director of the Duke University Breast Cancer Program, puts it this way: "Some patients are 'cured' by surgery because their tumors are not metastatic. Other patients are destined to relapse. We're not very good at distinguishing between these two populations, so a huge amount of overtreatment goes on."

If gene profiling lives up to its promise, it may radically alter the treatment options available to women. With the foreknowledge gleaned from molecular signatures, thousands of patients every year with tumors deemed unlikely to spread may be able to skip chemotherapy. And even when chemo is warranted, patients may find their course of treatment dramatically altered if gene profiling is able to determine in advance whether drug A or drug B will be more effective. Still other patients, if diagnosed with tumors for which no remedy is known, may elect to forego conventional chemotherapy (if it's unlikely to help) and go straight to experimental therapies.

The idea that a tumor's potential to metastasize may be knowable while the tumor is still very tiny is encouraging, but at the same time such foreknowledge may be devastating for those with a bleak prognosis. Yet not all oncologists are getting on the gene-profiling bandwagon. "It's a big stretch to say that if your cancer is bad, you might as well give up," says Dr. Larry Norton, head of solid tumor oncology at Memorial Sloan-Kettering Cancer Center in New York. "It may be that those are the tumors that are most curable with chemotherapy." Dr. Steven Goodman, a biostatistician and epidemiologist at the Kimmel Cancer Center at Johns Hopkins University is adopting a "wait and see" attitude. "So far," he maintains, "there is absolutely zero evidence that you are better off deferring chemotherapy based on these predictions."

Despite such concerns and widespread agreement that prospective studies need to be conducted before genetic profiling is offered at U.S. clinics, the technique appears to be on the fast track. Bernards, who spearheaded the Dutch study along with Stephen Friend (then CEO of Rosetta Inpharmatics, which is now a subsidiary of Merck) has recently set up his own Amsterdam company, Agendia, to offer the gene-profiling test. A new prospective study will track breast cancer patients to see how well their future outcomes support Agendia's predictions. If preliminary results are successful, the study will expand to include thousands of women in clinical trials at forty different European medical centers. Half of the women will receive treatment based on gene-profiling predictions; for the other half, decisions will be based on conventional criteria.

Funded by the Avon Foundation, a team led by Dr. Daniel Haber, director of the Massachusetts General Hospital Cancer Center in Boston, has begun gathering samples from five-hundred patients to send to the Netherlands for analysis. The patients are undergoing conventional therapy and will be monitored to observe the progression of their disease. If Agendia's gene-profiling predictions are borne out, the Massachusetts pilot study will expand to include five-thousand patients at twelve U.S. clinics in the Avon Network of Medical Centers.

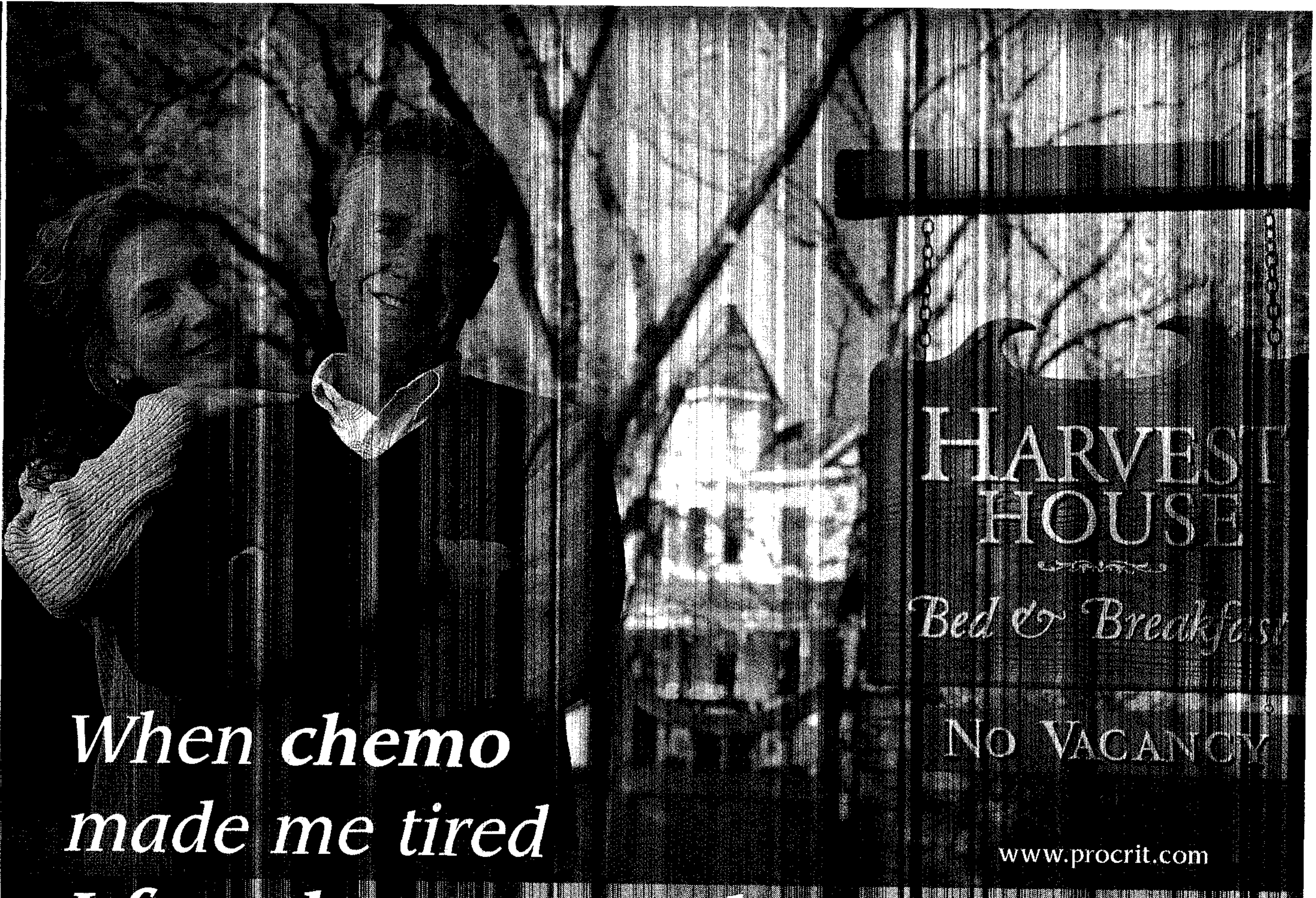
"Clearly this is at the cutting-edge of oncology," says Haber. Susan Braun, the president and CEO of the Susan G. Komen Breast Cancer Foundation agrees. "It's revolutionary," she enthuses, "and it's moving very quickly into the mainstream." Cindy Pearson, executive director of the National Women's Health Network, is more cautious. "Is it hopeful? Yes. Probably it's bigger than anything else in a decade. But is it here now? No!" All agree that treatment decisions based on gene profiling are unwise before its predictions are validated by large-scale clinical trials that follow women over time.

Meanwhile, one of the promising advances in chemotherapy research is a new "dose-dense" treatment. High-risk breast-cancer patients (those whose cancer cells have spread to their lymph-nodes) receive the conventional type and amount of chemotherapy, but doses of the drugs are administered over a shorter period of time (every two weeks instead of every three). According to Memorial Sloan-Kettering's Norton, the new dose-dense method reduces the risk of death. In a clinical trial, ninety-two per cent of women on the two-week schedule vs. ninety per cent of those on the three-week schedule were alive after three years. Although the study has only followed women for four years, many doctors are already putting patients whose lymph nodes show signs of cancer on the dose-dense regimen.

Giving chemotherapy before, rather than after, surgery is another strategy that's becoming common in breast cancer care. If given right after a biopsy shows invasive cancer, chemotherapy may shrink the tumor enough so that a woman can elect to have a lumpectomy rather than a full mastectomy. It also helps doctors find out early on whether the patient's tumor will be responsive to a particular drug. Ellis of Duke notes that doctors are beginning to try pre-operative hormone therapy as well, particularly with older patients.

The latest techniques in radiation therapy are "hot, new, and somewhat controversial," says Dr. Jay Harris, chief of radiation oncology for the combined Dana-Farber and Brigham and Women's Hospital program in Boston. In targeted or intensity modulated radiation therapy (IMRT), instead of radiating the whole breast over five to six weeks, the procedure is completed in five days, with an accelerated radiation dosage aimed only at the area where the tumor is. Another technique implants strands of radioactive "seeds" into the tumor bed after surgery and leaves them there for about three days. Yet another method inserts what amounts to a tiny balloon on the tip of a catheter into the cavity left by a tumor's excision. Twice a day for five days the balloon is filled with radioactive pellets. In a further variant of radiation therapy, now in clinical trials in Italy and the UK, doctors treat the tumor bed during surgery with radiation from an external beam machine in the operating room. Long-term survival outcomes with the new radiation methods are not yet known, but doctors expect these techniques to become increasingly popular, especially with elderly or out-of-town patients who have difficulty visiting a clinic for a protracted period.

Innovative commercial applications and devices for cancer



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*When **chemo** made me tired* ***I found my strength*** *in time for peak season.*

If you're on chemotherapy, and finding it difficult to do the things you normally do, it's important to tell your doctor about your symptoms. You may actually be anemic and not even know it. In fact, anemia affects 7 out of 10 chemotherapy patients, and can cause extreme tiredness, dizziness and shortness of breath. When you are anemic, you may also find it difficult to think clearly. Furthermore, chemo-related anemia may cause you to interrupt your treatment. Fortunately, there's PROCRIT. It treats chemo-related anemia by helping you regain red blood cells lost during chemotherapy, and more red blood cells can mean more strength. Help your doctor help you. Report your symptoms, and ask if PROCRIT is right for you.

PROCRIT is for chemotherapy-related anemia in patients with most types of cancer. PROCRIT is proven and safe. PROCRIT is available by prescription only and is injected by your doctor or nurse. In studies, diarrhea, edema, fever, vomiting, shortness of breath, tingling, and upper respiratory infection occurred more often with PROCRIT than placebo. *Although high blood pressure* has been noted rarely in cancer patients treated with PROCRIT, blood pressure should be monitored carefully, particularly in patients with a history of high blood pressure or heart disease. Please see the following brief summary of Prescribing Information.

PROCRIT®
EPOETIN ALFA
Strength for Living®

FOR CHEMO-RELATED ANEMIA IN PATIENTS
WITH MOST TYPES OF CANCER

**TALK TO YOUR DOCTOR
OR CALL 1-877-4PROCRIT.**

Manufactured by Amgen Inc., Thousand Oaks, CA 91320-1799 Distributed by: Ortho Biotech Products, L.P., Bridgewater, NJ 08807-0914 MS-127

BRIEF SUMMARY OF PRESCRIBING INFORMATION INDICATED FOR THE TREATMENT OF ANEMIA OF CANCER PATIENTS ON CHEMOTHERAPY

PROCRIT®
EPOETIN ALFA
For Injection

FOR FULL PRESCRIBING INFORMATION FOR ALL INDICATIONS,
REFER TO THE *PHYSICIANS' DESK REFERENCE®*

INDICATIONS AND USAGE

PROCRIT® (Epoetin alfa) is indicated for the treatment of anemia in patients with nonmyeloid *malignancies where anemia is due to the effect of concomitantly administered chemotherapy.* PROCRIT is indicated to decrease the need for transfusions in patients who will be receiving concomitant chemotherapy for a minimum of 2 months. PROCRIT is not indicated for the treatment of anemia in cancer patients due to other factors such as iron or folate deficiencies, hemolysis, or gastrointestinal bleeding, which should be managed appropriately.

CONTRAINDICATIONS

PROCRIT is contraindicated in patients with: 1) Uncontrolled hypertension; 2) Known hypersensitivity to mammalian cell-derived products; 3) Known hypersensitivity to Albumin (Human).

WARNINGS

Pediatric Use: The multidose preserved formulation contains benzyl alcohol. Benzyl alcohol has been reported to be associated with an increased incidence of neurological and other complications in premature infants, which are sometimes fatal.

Pure Red Cell Aplasia

Pure red cell aplasia (PRCA), in association with neutralizing antibodies to native erythropoietin, has been observed in patients treated with recombinant erythropoietins. PRCA has been reported in a limited number of patients exposed to PROCRIT. This has been reported predominantly in patients with CRF. Any patient with loss of response to PROCRIT should be evaluated for the etiology of loss of effect (see PRECAUTIONS: Lack or Loss of Response). PROCRIT should be discontinued in any patient with evidence of PRCA and the patient evaluated for the presence of binding and neutralizing antibodies to PROCRIT, native erythropoietin, and any other recombinant erythropoietin administered to the patient. Amgen/Ortho Biotech Products, L.P. should be contacted to assist in this evaluation. In patients with PRCA secondary to neutralizing antibodies to erythropoietin, PROCRIT should not be administered and such patients should not be switched to another product as anti-erythropoietin antibodies cross-react with other erythropoietins (see ADVERSE REACTIONS).

PRECAUTIONS

The parenteral administration of any biologic product should be attended by appropriate precautions in case allergic or other untoward reactions occur (see CONTRAINDICATIONS). In clinical trials, while *transient rashes were occasionally observed concurrently with PROCRIT therapy, no serious allergic* or anaphylactic reactions were reported. (See ADVERSE REACTIONS for more information regarding allergic reactions.)

The safety and efficacy of PROCRIT therapy have not been established in patients with a known history of a seizure disorder or underlying hematologic disease (eg, sickle cell anemia, myelodysplastic syndromes, or hypercoagulable disorders).

In some female patients, menses have resumed following PROCRIT therapy; the possibility of pregnancy should be discussed and the need for contraception evaluated.

Hematology: Exacerbation of porphyria has been observed rarely in patients with chronic renal failure (CRF) treated with PROCRIT. However, PROCRIT has not caused increased urinary excretion of porphyrin metabolites in normal volunteers, even in the presence of a rapid erythropoietic response. Nevertheless, PROCRIT should be used with caution in patients with known porphyria.

In preclinical studies in dogs and rats, but not in monkeys, PROCRIT therapy was associated with subclinical bone marrow fibrosis. Therefore, cancer patients should have hematocrit (HCT) measured once a week (QW) until HCT has been stabilized, and measured periodically thereafter.

Lack or Loss of Response: If the patient fails to respond or to maintain a response to doses within the recommended dosing range, the following etiologies should be considered and evaluated: 1) Iron deficiency: Virtually all patients will eventually require supplemental iron therapy (see Iron Evaluation). 2) Underlying infectious, inflammatory, or malignant processes. 3) Occult blood loss. 4) Underlying hematologic diseases (ie, thalassemia, refractory anemia, or other myelodysplastic disorders). 5) Vitamin deficiencies: folic acid or vitamin B12. 6) Hemolysis. 7) Aluminum intoxication. 8) Osteitis fibrosa cystica.

In the absence of another etiology, the patient should be evaluated for evidence of PRCA and sera should be tested for the presence of antibodies to recombinant erythropoietins.

Iron Evaluation: During PROCRIT therapy, absolute or functional iron deficiency may develop. Functional iron deficiency, with normal ferritin levels but low transferrin saturation, is presumably due to the inability to mobilize iron stores rapidly enough to support increased erythropoiesis. Transferrin saturation should be at least 20% and ferritin should be at least 100 ng/mL.

Prior to and during PROCRIT therapy, the patient's iron status, including transferrin saturation (serum iron divided by iron binding capacity) and serum ferritin, should be evaluated. Virtually all patients will eventually require supplemental iron to increase or maintain transferrin saturation to levels which will adequately support erythropoiesis stimulated by PROCRIT.

Drug Interactions: No evidence of interaction of PROCRIT with other drugs was observed in the course of clinical trials.

Carcinogenesis, Mutagenesis, and Impairment of Fertility: Carcinogenic potential of PROCRIT *has not been evaluated. PROCRIT does not induce bacterial gene mutation (Ames Test), chromo*somal aberrations in mammalian cells, micronuclei in mice, or gene mutation at the HGPRT locus. In male and female rats treated intravenously (IV) with PROCRIT, there was a trend for slightly increased fetal wastage at doses of 100 and 500 U/kg.

Pregnancy Category C: PROCRIT has been shown to have adverse effects in rats when given in doses 5 times the human dose. There are no adequate and well-controlled studies in pregnant women. PROCRIT should be used during pregnancy only if potential benefit justifies the potential risk to the fetus.

In studies in female rats, there were decreases in body weight gain, delays in appearance of abdominal hair, delayed eyelid opening, delayed ossification, and decreases in the number of caudal vertebrae in the F1 fetuses of the 500 U/kg group. In female rats treated IV, there was a trend for slightly increased fetal wastage at doses of 100 and 500 U/kg.

Nursing Mothers: Postnatal observations of the live offspring (F1 generation) of female rats treated with PROCRIT during gestation and lactation revealed decreases in body weight gain, delays in appearance of abdominal hair, eyelid opening, and decreases in the number of caudal vertebrae in the F1 fetuses of the 500 U/kg group. It is not known whether PROCRIT is excreted in human milk. Because many drugs are excreted in human milk, caution should be exercised when PROCRIT is administered to a nursing woman.

Pediatric Use: See WARNINGS, Pediatric Use.

Pediatric Cancer Patients on Chemotherapy: Published literature has reported the use of PROCRIT in approximately 64 anemic pediatric cancer patients ages 6 months to 18 years, treated with 25 to 300 U/kg subcutaneously (SC) or IV, 3 to 7 times per week. Increases in hemoglobin and decreases in transfusion requirements were noted.

Hypertension: Hypertension, associated with a significant increase in HCT, has been noted rarely in cancer patients treated with PROCRIT. Nevertheless, blood pressure (BP) in patients treated with PROCRIT should be monitored carefully, particularly in patients with an underlying history of hypertension or cardiovascular disease.

Seizures: In double-blind, placebo-controlled trials, 3.2% (N=2/63) of patients treated with PROCRIT and 2.9% (N=2/68) of placebo-treated patients had seizures. Seizures in 1.6% (N=1/63) of patients treated with PROCRIT occurred in the context of a significant increase in BP and HCT from baseline values. However, both patients treated with PROCRIT also had underlying CNS pathology which may have been related to seizure activity.

Thrombotic Events: In double-blind, placebo-controlled trials, 3.2% (N=2/63) of patients treated with PROCRIT and 11.8% (N=8/68) of placebo-treated patients had thrombotic events (eg, pulmonary embolism, cerebrovascular accident).

Growth Factor Potential: PROCRIT is a growth factor that primarily stimulates red cell production. However, the possibility that PROCRIT can act as a growth factor for any tumor type, particularly myeloid malignancies, cannot be excluded.

ADVERSE REACTIONS

Immunogenicity

As with all therapeutic proteins, there is the potential for immunogenicity. Cases of antibody-induced PRCA in patients treated with recombinant human erythropoietins have been described in publications.

Very rare occurrences of PRCA and the presence of antibodies with neutralizing activity have been reported since market introduction of PROCRIT in the United States (see WARNINGS: Pure Red Cell Aplasia). Cases have been observed in patients treated by both SC and IV routes of administration. Among reported cases where the route of administration is known, PRCA has been observed more with SC administration than IV administration.

The incidence of antibody formation is highly dependent on the sensitivity and specificity of the assay. Additionally, the observed incidence of antibody positivity in an assay may be influenced by several factors including sample handling, timing of sample collection, concomitant medications, and underlying disease. For these reasons, comparison of the incidence of antibodies to PROCRIT with the incidence of antibodies to other products may be misleading.

Adverse experiences reported in clinical trials with PROCRIT in cancer patients were consistent with the underlying disease state. In double-blind, placebo-controlled studies of up to 3-months duration involving 131 cancer patients, adverse events with an incidence >10% in either patients treated with PROCRIT or placebo-treated patients were as indicated below.

Percent of Patients Reporting Event: Event followed by Patients Treated With PROCRIT (N=63) first, Placebo-Treated Patients (N=68) second:
Pyrexia 29%, 19%; Diarrhea 21%,[a] 7%; Nausea 17%,[b] 32%; Vomiting 17%, 15%; Edema 17%,[c] 1%; Asthenia 13%, 16%; Fatigue 13%, 15%; Shortness of Breath 13%, 9%; Paresthesia 11%, 6%; Upper Respiratory Infection 11%, 4%; Dizziness 5%, 12%; Trunk Pain 3%,[d] 16%.
[a]*P*=0.041; [b]*P*=0.069; [c]*P*=0.0016; [d]*P*=0.017.

Although some statistically significant differences between patients treated with PROCRIT and placebo-treated patients were noted, the overall safety profile of PROCRIT appeared to be consistent with the disease process of advanced cancer. During double-blind and subsequent open-label therapy in which patients (N=72 for total exposure to PROCRIT) were treated for up to 32 weeks with doses as high as 927 U/kg, the adverse experience profile of PROCRIT was consistent with the progression of advanced cancer.

Based on comparable survival data and on the percentage of patients treated with PROCRIT and placebo-treated patients who discontinued therapy due to death, disease progression or adverse experiences (22% and 13%, respectively; *P*=0.25), the clinical outcome in patients treated with PROCRIT and placebo-treated patients appeared to be similar. Available data from animal tumor models and measurement of proliferation of solid tumor cells from clinical biopsy specimens in response to PROCRIT suggest that PROCRIT does not potentiate tumor growth. Nevertheless, as a growth factor, the possibility that PROCRIT may potentiate growth of some tumors, particularly myeloid tumors, cannot be excluded. A randomized controlled Phase IV study is currently ongoing to further evaluate this issue.

The mean peripheral white blood cell count was unchanged following PROCRIT therapy compared to the corresponding value in placebo-treated group.

OVERDOSAGE

The maximum amount of PROCRIT that can be safely administered in single or multiple doses has not been determined. Doses of up to 1500 U/kg 3 times weekly (TIW) for 3 to 4 weeks have been administered to adults without any direct toxic effects of PROCRIT itself. Therapy with PROCRIT can result in polycythemia if the HCT is not carefully monitored and the dose appropriately adjusted. If the suggested target range is exceeded, PROCRIT may be temporarily withheld until the HCT returns to the suggested target range; PROCRIT therapy may then be resumed using a lower dose (see DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION). If polycythemia is of concern, phlebotomy may be indicated to decrease the HCT.

DOSAGE AND ADMINISTRATION

Baseline endogenous serum erythropoietin levels varied among patients in these trials with approximately 75% (N=83/110) having endogenous serum erythropoietin levels <132 mU/mL, and approximately 4% (N=4/110) of patients having endogenous serum erythropoietin levels >500 mU/mL. In general, patients with lower baseline serum erythropoietin levels responded more vigorously to PROCRIT than patients with higher erythropoietin levels. Although no specific serum erythropoietin level can be stipulated above which patients would be unlikely to respond to PROCRIT therapy, treatment of patients with grossly elevated serum erythropoietin levels (eg, *>200 mU/mL) is not recommended. The HCT should be monitored on a weekly basis in patients* receiving PROCRIT therapy until HCT becomes stable.

Starting Dose: The recommended starting dose of PROCRIT for adults is 150 U/kg SC TIW. For pediatric patients, see PRECAUTIONS, Pediatric Use.

Dose Adjustment: If the response is not satisfactory in terms of reducing transfusion requirements or increasing HCT after 8 weeks of therapy, the dose of PROCRIT can be increased up to 300 U/kg TIW. If patients have not responded satisfactorily to a PROCRIT dose of 300 U/kg TIW, it is unlikely that they will respond to higher doses of PROCRIT. If the HCT exceeds 40%, the dose of PROCRIT should be withheld until the HCT falls to 36%. The dose of PROCRIT should be reduced by 25% *when treatment is resumed and titrated to maintain the desired HCT. If the initial dose of PROCRIT* includes a very rapid HCT response (eg, an increase of more than 4 percentage points in any 2-week period), the dose of PROCRIT should be reduced.

STORAGE

Store at 2° to 8°C (36° to 46°F). Do not freeze or shake.

◆

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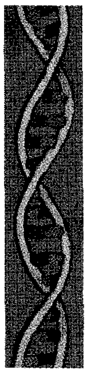
treatment are increasingly entering the marketplace. New vacuum-assisted biopsies can extract breast tissue more quickly and less invasively than surgical biopsies. One vacuum-assisted product is a new automated tissue excision and collection device from Suros for use with magnetic resonance imaging (MRI). It can be used right inside the MRI suite for speedy biopsies of suspicious masses that cannot be seen with ultrasound or stereotactic X-ray equipment.

Sentinel-node biopsy is another relatively new procedure that many women are already taking advantage of. Instead of excising ten to twenty lymph nodes to see if the cancer has spread, surgeons take out only the "sentinel" or primary nodes that are the first to receive lymphatic drainage from the tumor. If these nodes contain cancer cells, there's a good chance that the others do too. But, according to Dr. Deborah Axelrod, the chief of St. Vincent's Comprehensive Breast Center in New York, if the sentinel node is cancer free, there's only about a five per cent chance that the other nodes contain cancer cells. With this procedure women avoid a total armpit-node dissection, which leaves about ten per cent of patients with lymphedema, in which the arm is chronically swollen and prone to infection.



Dr. David Krag, a professor of surgery at the University of Vermont and a sentinel-node researcher at the university's Comprehensive Cancer Center cautions, however, that any judgement that a sentinel node is free of cancer may depend on how thoroughly the node is inspected for cancer cells. Despite a relatively small but encouraging study published last month in *The New England Journal of Medicine*, Krag believes that "sentinel-node biopsy should still be considered an experimental procedure." Before advocating the procedure, he is waiting for the results of a clinical trial that encompasses seventy U.S. cancer-care centers, including his own. Sentinel node biopsies are "pretty accurate," concedes Krag, but if cancer cells are lurking in lymph nodes left behind, a woman's survival may be affected.

"THE ABILITY TO PREDICT THE FUTURE OUTCOME OF A TUMOR IS NOTHING SHORT OF DAZZLING."

In hopes of detecting breast cancer earlier, some researchers are experimenting with ductal lavage, in which a saline solution is injected into milk ducts and then withdrawn. The idea is to collect breast fluid and analyze it for abnormal cells–information that is used in combination with mammograms to gauge the risk of cancer. But the problem with ductal lavage, according to Amy Langer, the executive director of the National Alliance of Breast Cancer Organizations, is that "We know too little about the natural state of normal breast tissue." In other words when abnormal cells are detected, no one yet knows how aggressively to treat the patient.

For early detection, then, women must continue to rely on mammography (often used in conjunction with ultrasound sonograms for women with hard-to-image breasts). But mammography is an imperfect screening tool, and increasingly, MRI is being used for those with ambiguous results or for patients whose cancer has spread to their lymph nodes. Several studies presented at ASCO suggest that MRI is more sensitive than mammography at detecting tumors. But MRI is so sensitive that it can often detect abnormalities that are not cancer, thereby subjecting women to unnecessary anxiety and further testing. In short, early detection is nowhere near as early or as accurate as everyone would like it to be.

Given the current state of affairs, it's no wonder that genetic profiling has caused such a stir. But a host of questions remains. One development that could speed things up is a procedure being tested independently by various researchers in collaboration with commercial companies such as Genomic Health and Arcturus. Instead of using frozen assays of fresh tumor tissue (as the original Netherlands study did), these scientists are testing tumor tissue that has been stored at room temperature after being fixed in formalin (a derivative of formaldehyde) and embedded in paraffin wax. Hospitals have routinely been collecting and storing such samples for many decades, and these collections now constitute a wealth of potential information because, in many cases, the patient outcomes are already known.

According to Duke's Ellis, until quite recently, scientists believed that the RNA in tumors degraded, making tissue stored at room temperature "unstudyable." Fortunately, "that turns out not to be the case," reports Ellis, who is finding that, "We can do profiling on formalin-fixed tissue, and that is incredibly powerful."

Results using this technique are expected later this year from Celera Diagnostics, a California-based company that researches and develops novel molecular diagnostic products for chronic diseases and cancer. The firm is aiming to corroborate and extend the Netherlands findings in a retrospective study that correlates gene expression patterns with the outcomes of two-thousand patients whose clinical histories are already known. "Our initial results look very promising," says Chief Scientific Officer Tom White, who expects the study to lead to a gene-profiling product for FDA approval, a process that will take at least two more years.

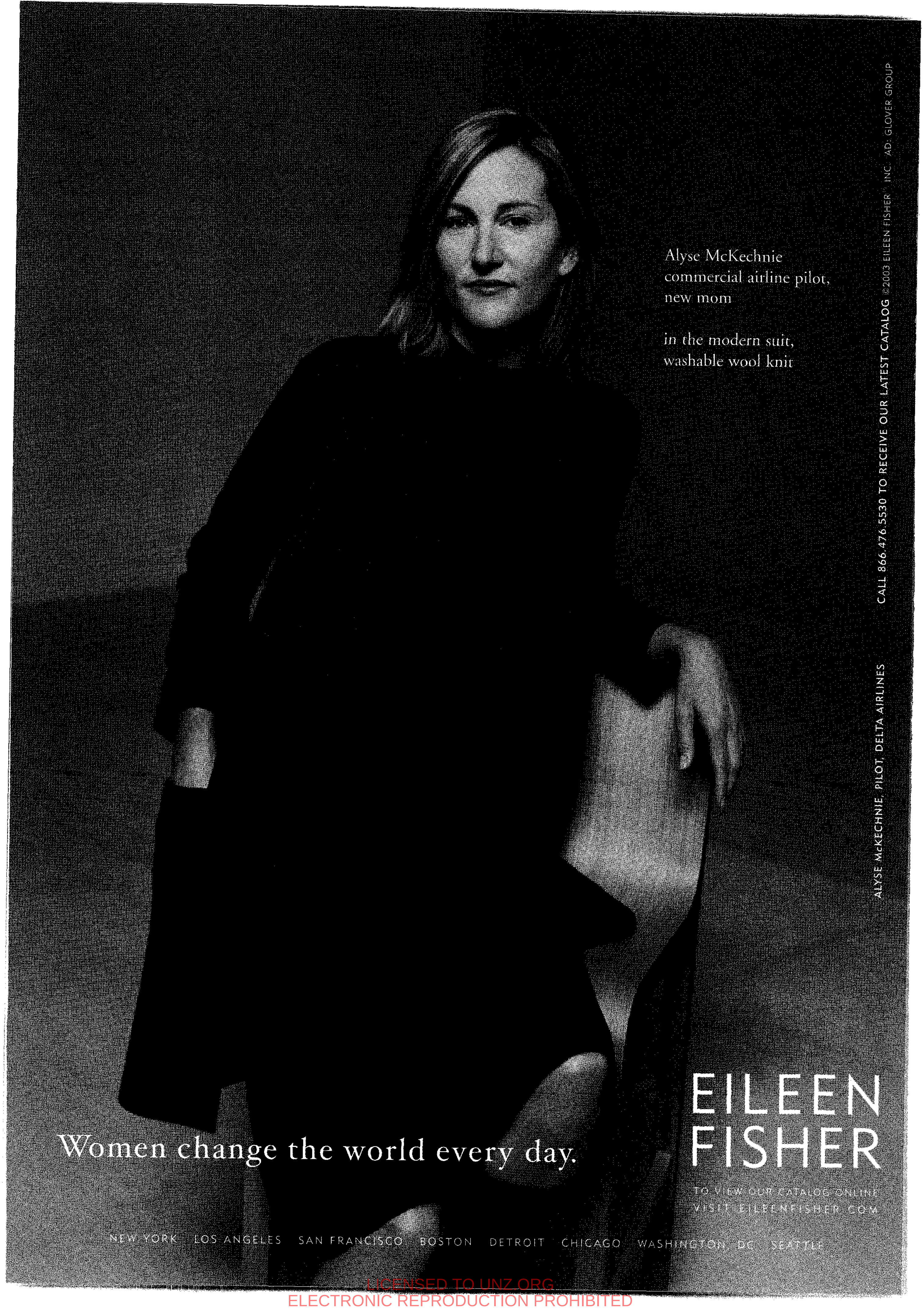
The overall picture for breast cancer is still "not pretty," says Barbara Brenner, executive director of the Breast Cancer Action advocacy group, though she acknowledges that treatment for side effects has improved. "We're not nearly as far as the general public thinks we are," she says.

But, if the picture is still "not pretty," it is gradually becoming a little rosier. New chemotherapy and radiation techniques are offering hope, and the ability of genetic profiling to predict the future outcome of a tumor is nothing short of dazzling. For breast cancer patients, its promise is immense.

And if the new formalin-fixed strategy holds up, says Ellis, "we can analyze ten years worth of information in six months."

Judy Foreman is a nationally syndicated health columnist who lectures on medicine at Harvard Medical School.

WE WELCOME COMMENTS ABOUT THIS SUPPLEMENT which can be sent to Angela Gaudioso, Director of Special Sections, The New Yorker, 4 Times Square, New York, NY 10036 or E-mailed to **LETTERS@newyorkerreaderlink.com.**



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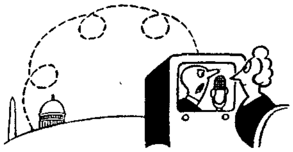
THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

COMMENT
REAL REASONS

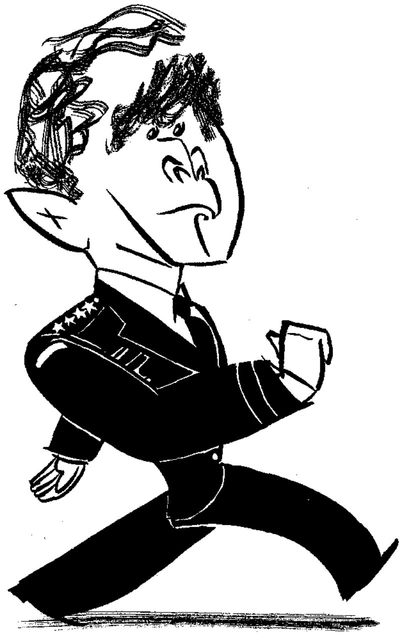


The war in Iraq was a long time coming—so long that it was obvious in Washington that war was certain even before the diplomatic drama that preceded it began to unfold. President Bush and Secretary of State Powell went to the United Nations, made their charges against Saddam Hussein, forced the weapons inspectors to return, presented evidence of their own when the inspectors found none, and, finally, concluded that Iraq would not disarm and war could not be postponed, no matter what the Security Council thought—and all that, evidently, came after the decision was made to invade. Disarmament may have been a sincere (if, it now appears, unwarranted) reason for war, but it wasn't dispositive. It was the plot device that powered a preordained procession.

The President's television speech about Iraq last week had the feeling of something real being revealed after a thick, obscuring outer layer has been stripped away. Called upon to justify the war anew (because things haven't been going well in Iraq), and deprived of his main prewar argument (because no forbidden weapons have been found), Bush gave us something that seemed much closer to what his true thinking was when he made the decision for war. The news in his speech was the request for eighty-seven billion dollars and the decision to ask for international troops, but the greater significance lay in what Bush told us about his own beliefs and, therefore, about what the country is committed to while he is President.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

Bush's speech was not limited to Iraq; he gave us a general argument about the Middle East, terrorism, and democracy. The first link in his chain of logic was the idea that, as he put it, "for a generation leading up to September the 11th, 2001, terrorists and their radical allies attacked innocent people in the Middle East and beyond, without facing a sustained and serious response." (This formulation is notable for its implicit indictment of the first President Bush for pusillanimity, and for putting the son in the position of correcting the father's mistake.) So just about any forceful response to terrorism, or to the "radical allies" of terrorism (a group that included Saddam, evidently), would cause terrorism to decrease. As Bush said, "We have learned that terrorist attacks are not caused by the use of strength. They are invited by the perception of weakness."



This doesn't quite parse—it doesn't allow for the terrorist attacks that have followed the use of force in Iraq, or for the evident immunity of most of the world's weaklings to terrorist attacks. Terrorists, unfortunately, appear to target qualities more specific than mere meekness. But Bush's statement does claim that reducing terrorism justifies virtually any use of American force. If you believe this, as Bush seems to do with every fibre of his being, how could you in good conscience not go to war in the region from which the worst terrorism emanates? Back in June, Thomas Friedman, of the *Times*, wrote breezily, "The 'real reason' for this war, which was never stated, was that after 9/11 America needed to hit someone in the Arab-Muslim world." Well, now Bush has as much as stated it. Friedman went on, "Smashing Saudi Arabia or Syria would have been fine. But we hit Saddam for one simple reason: because we could, and because he deserved it, and because he was right in the heart of that world."

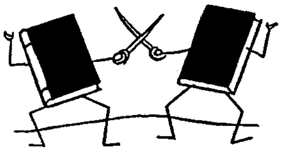
Bush's second point was that, like the use of strength, freedom and democracy inevitably reduce terrorism, too. The choice is simple: "The Middle East will either become a place of progress and peace, or it will be an exporter of violence and terror that takes more lives in America and in other free nations." This, again, is impressive in its clarity and certainty, but counter-examples fairly leap to mind. What about Pakistan—a quasi-democracy, but also one of the world's leading terrorist sanctuaries? What about Saddam's Iraq—the Middle East's most oppressive regime, but one that left little maneuvering room for terrorists? What about the supranational Al Qaeda, the most dangerous of the terrorist organizations, whose survival apparently requires less the help of "tyrants" than of chaotic conditions in weak states—such as Iraq and Afghanistan now? As Bush makes the case, all such troublesome particulars must yield to an ironclad general rule: "Everywhere that freedom takes hold, terror will retreat." Therefore, every American military attack on a Middle Eastern tyrant—a term that plausibly encompasses most of the region's heads of state—reduces the risk of terrorist attacks on the United States. It's hard to imagine a broader charter than the one Bush grants himself through this set of assumptions.

Goals as morally grand as defeating terrorism and ending tyranny make any objection to the program for reasons of logic or practicality look puny, niggling, and cynical. The President's rhetoric divides the world into those who have passion and courage and those who believe in nothing except a self-defeating caution. The willingness to make the gesture overwhelms whatever difficulties there are on the ground. This is not just a habit of thought that Bush conveniently seized upon after the war. The understaffing of the reconstruction and the lack of post-combat planning wasn't the result merely of Donald Rumsfeld's bullheadedness. It stemmed from the President's soaring conviction that courageous intentions must inevitably produce pleasing results.

As we are finding out in Iraq, military boldness does not always decrease terrorism. It can, in fact, inspire it—witness the terrorists swarming into Iraq, including members of Al Qaeda, who weren't there before. Toppling tyrants does not automatically decrease terrorism, either, and in the short run it isn't even guaranteed to make life better for people in the countries the tyrants ruled. Even the most powerful nation in history does not have an infinitely large army or infinite funds, and must live in the realm of calculations about what is possible and what will be effective. Consequences are not, alas, inevitably the product of intentions; they are determined by the collision of intentions and reality. It isn't cowardly to be (dread word) realistic. It isn't amoral to think through what will follow from particular actions. Quite the opposite. Bush's desire to end terrorism and spread democracy can't be gainsaid. But if, using the almost unlimited license he has given himself, he winds up making brave-seeming lunges at those goals without actually attaining them, then confronting evil, his proudest purpose, will soon become a luxury he can no longer afford. That is about the worst outcome imaginable, and not just for Bush personally.

—*Nicholas Lemann*

INK
TRADING PLACES



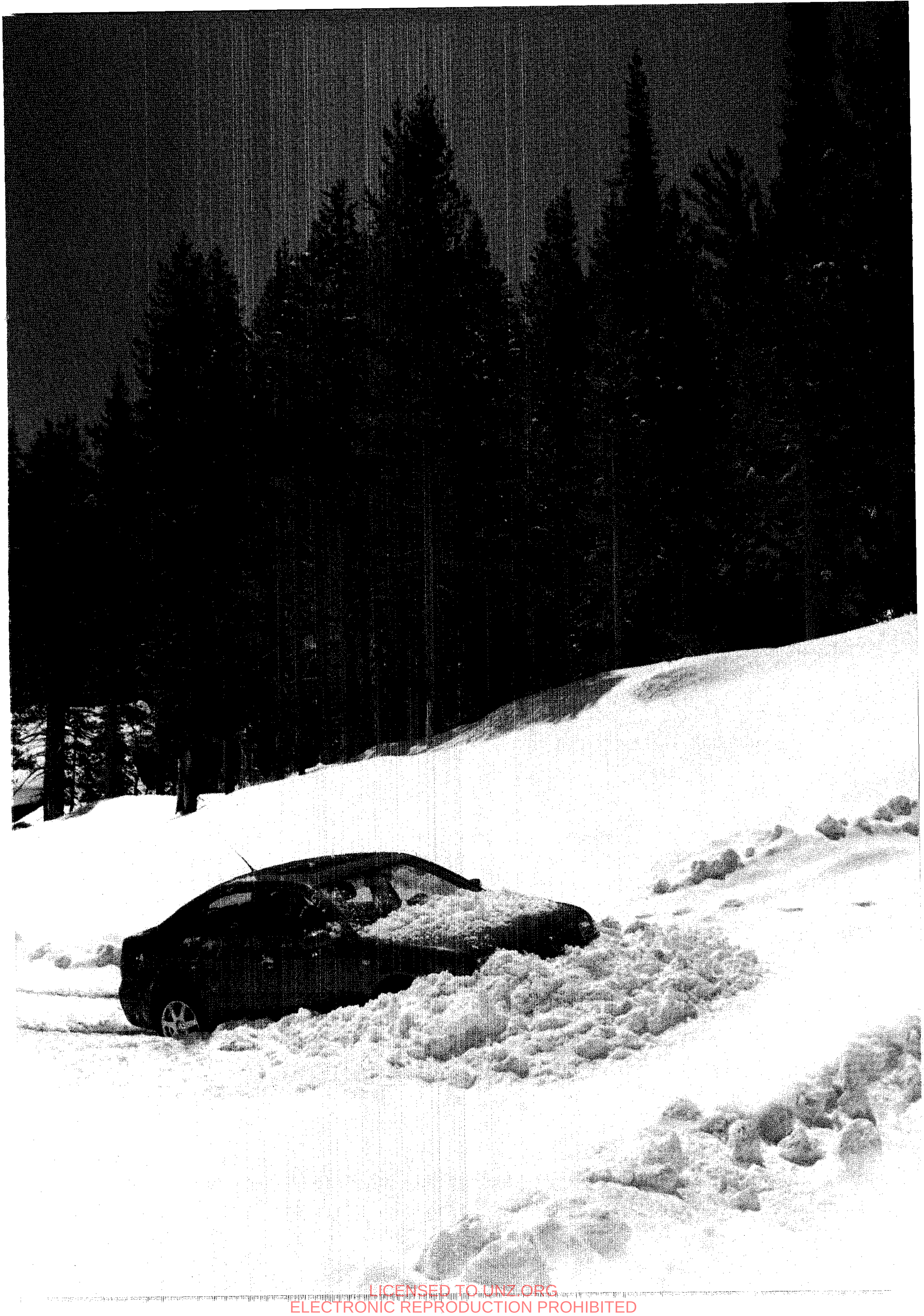
Among the many night tables upon which sits a copy of "Trading Up," the new novel by Candace Bushnell that chronicles the aspirational manners and consumer preferences of contemporary New Yorkers, is that of Michael J. Silverstein, a retail analyst at the Boston Consulting Group and a soon-to-be-published author. Silverstein's book, which will come out next month, also chronicles the aspirational manners and consumer preferences of contemporary Americans, and it, too, bears the title "Trading Up."

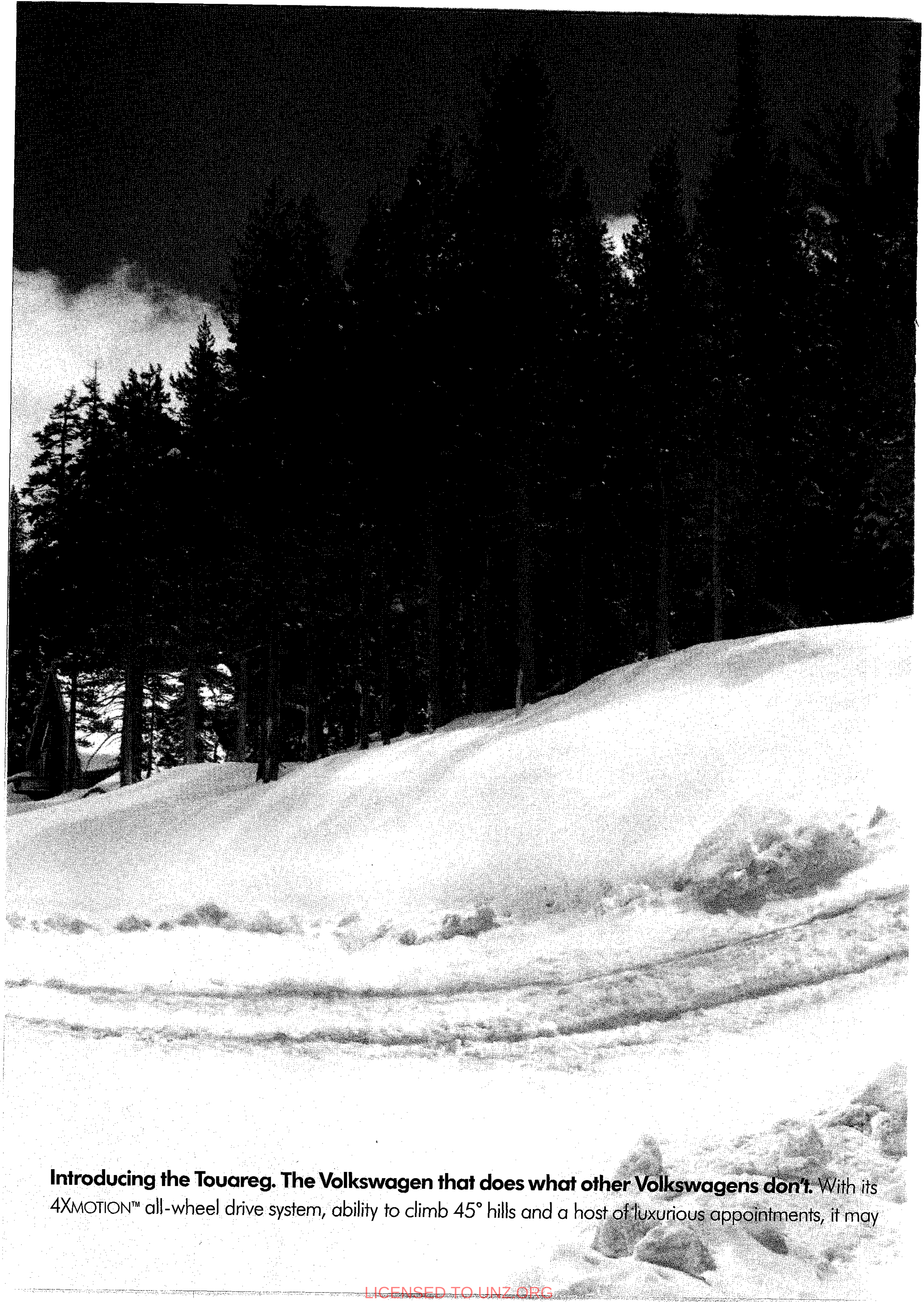
The coincidence, Silverstein explained the other day from his office in Chicago, is one of those weird prepublication happenstances that, not having been avoided, can only be embraced. He had been calling his book "Trading Up" for the three years of its gestation and only discovered last spring that he had a rival, one that recently spent eight weeks on the *Times* best-seller list. "In the movie business you can lock in a title, but in the book business you cannot," he explained. He added gamely, "We are competing in good company."

The books are in fact very different, as is suggested by their covers, which bear images unlikely to draw would-be readers astray: a graphic of an arrow pointing upward (Silverstein); a pair of long, bestockinged legs in stiletto heels (Bushnell). Unlike Bushnell's confection, which deliberately invites comparisons to "The House of Mirth" (her leading man is named after that novel's hero), Silverstein's nonfiction work, which bears the subtitle "The New American Luxury," is more Wharton School than Wharton, Edith. The book, which he co-wrote with Neil Fiske, a former colleague, is an upbeat survey of a range of consumer brands—Whirlpool, Belvedere, Williams-Sonoma—which, the authors argue, are successful because they appeal not just to the material needs of consumers but to their emotional desires. In Silverstein's lexicon, "trading up" is what consumers do when they choose Nutro pet food over the cheaper Alpo, or Bath & Body Works lotion over Vaseline Intensive Care. Meanwhile, to Bushnell, "trading up" means replacing one's first, pitifully limited husband with a second spouse found at a higher social elevation.

Should a reader pick up the nonfictional "Trading Up" in error, he or she will not be disappointed: the book, which draws on interviews with covetous consumers, provides an even juicier read than its fictional counterpart. There's Jake, a construction worker who swears by his Callaway golf clubs because they make him feel rich and powerful, even though he isn't. "When I kick your butt on the course, I feel good, I feel equal," he says, after kicking the author's butt on the course. (Jake also makes the pathos-charged admission that, while his every-day beer is Budweiser, "when I'm on a date, if I say 'Give me a Sam Adams,' I know she knows I'm special and have some taste.") An owner of a Whirlpool washer-dryer calls the appliances "our little mechanical friends" and "part of my family." Silverstein and Fiske describe with cool remove the trading-up effects of divorce: "New singles spend more of their money on themselves, both to rebuild their personal brand . . . and as a salve for their emotional distress."

The overlap between the books does,





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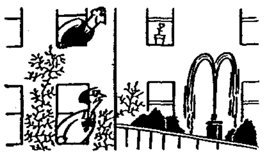
however, go beyond the general and into the specific: the heroine of Bushnell's book, Janey Wilcox, is "a famous Victoria's Secret model," while the implied hero of Silverstein's book is Leslie H. Wexner, the chairman and C.E.O. of The Limited Brands, which includes the Victoria's Secret company. A chapter about Wexner tells how, while he was developing the Victoria's Secret concept—that women would wear lacy nothings every day if they were comfortable—he quizzed each woman he dated about her tastes in lingerie. Silverstein and Fiske cite "Sex and the City," the television show which grew out of Bushnell's first book, as a setter of trading-up patterns, having disseminated a taste for Cosmopolitans and Manolo Blahniks all across America. The book even quotes the wisdom of Bushnell's alter ego, Carrie Bradshaw: "Breakups: bad for the heart, good for the economy."

Silverstein has read the first few chapters of Bushnell's book, but he admits that he is as yet not entirely familiar with the customs of Janey Wilcox country. "She marries the guy with the Jaguar," he recalls. "I remember her being ridiculous in terms of what she's willing to do for a ride in the Jaguar"—that is, have sex with the Jaguar's owner, a strategy for satisfying automobile-related cravings not explored in the Silverstein "Trading Up." And Silverstein stumbles over the pronunciation of Blahnik, to which he tends to add an extra syllable. "I prefer Ferragamo, personally," he says.

—*Rebecca Mead*

WHEN IN ROME DEPT.

TALKING OUT LOUD



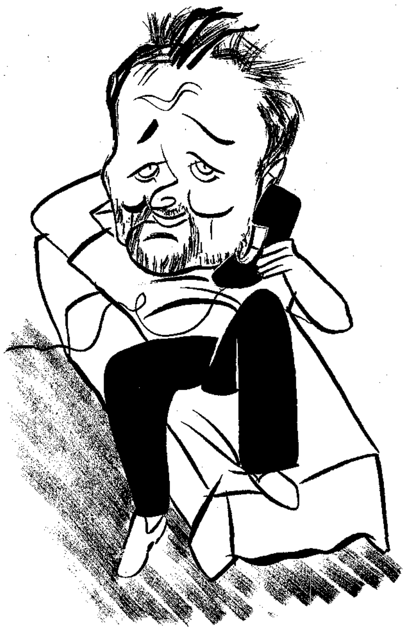
In the new movie "Lost in Translation," Bill Murray plays a dispirited movie star who goes to Tokyo to make a couple of million dollars by appearing in a TV commercial for Japanese whiskey. Shooting the movie last year took twenty-seven days, during which time Murray stayed in Tokyo's ultra-modern Park Hyatt, which was also used for many of the scenes in the movie. Murray's real struggles in his Park Hyatt room have made him curiously sensitive to hotel life. The other day, Murray and his "Lost in Translation" colleagues, including the director Sofia Coppola, arrived in Rome from the Venice Film Festival and checked in to the Hotel Eden. From there via telephone, in the middle of the night, he talked about his life in hotels.

"It's like Las Vegas in my room—no clocks," he said, in his slightly querulous, low-key manner. "I'm in Room *tre-uno-sei.*" He yawned. "This is the day I start learning Italian. *Buona sera. Grazie.* All that. I'll be here for five months, making a movie with Wes Anderson. My wife and my six kids will join me here for Thanksgiving. *Mi scusi.* Riccardo, the room-service waiter, is at the door. (*Mutterings, the sound of a door closing*) I don't let Riccardo come into the room," he went on. "I never let anybody come into my room. I'm very neat. I take care of my room. In Japan, they were always trying to get into my room. They would call and leave messages: 'Can we come and clean up the room?' The messages started with the housekeeper, then the desk clerks, then the general manager. The DVD player wouldn't work, so they sent an engineer to fix it. Behind him was the hotel manager and a SWAT team of women with buckets. While the engineer fussed with the DVD, the SWAT team stared furtively at my room. The hotel manager pushed his way in, but I sort of shepherded him to the door. He was brokenhearted," Murray said sympathetically, and continued:

"I'm on the third floor. I could jump out if I had to. I can see trees—a cypress, two olive trees. I feel I could sing to somebody down there. I can unlatch and open the windows. I can look down and see the construction worker in bright-orange reflective pants. He's wearing a pretty shell necklace. In Tokyo, the hotel is so high, you check in and you're on the forty-first floor. You look out the window and you're on a level with Mt. Fuji. (*Yawn*)

"I've been here less than twenty-four hours. I can't tell if I still have jet lag. We celebrated so much in Venice, my body feels like it's still there. As soon as we arrived here, everyone wanted to shop. Sofia found Cartier, near the Spanish Steps. Everybody was in a great mood. Everybody except me was smoking. I was saying to myself, 'I've got to be careful. Am I going to retain my modest life style or am I going to be Puff Daddy?' Paparazzi showed up, yelling, '*Beele! Beele!*' They meant me. *Beele!*

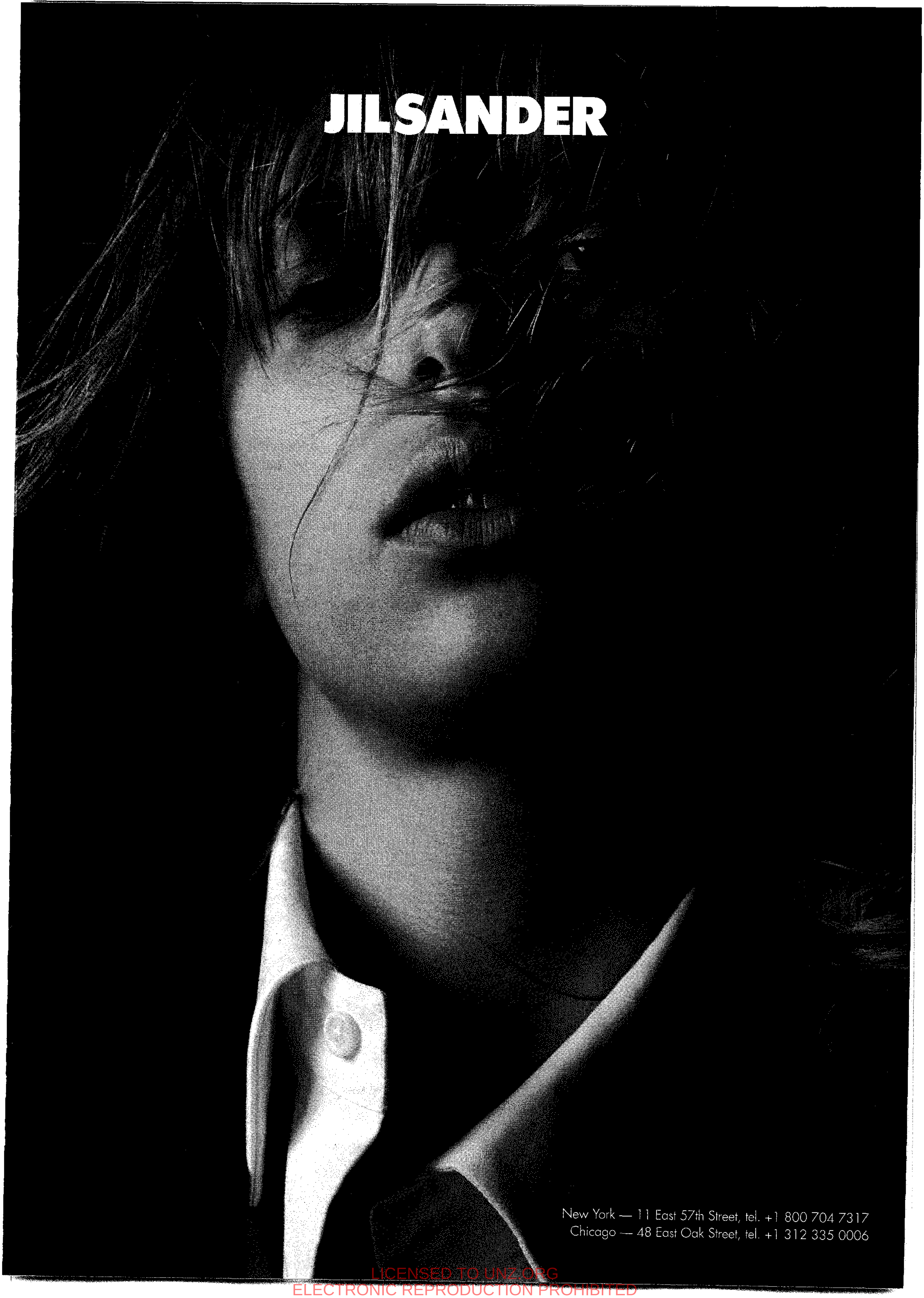
"At Cartier, I tried on a ring. A pinkie ring. A neat-looking thing with diamonds. *Un anello!*" he said, with a subdued cackle. "Lots and lots of diamonds. I thought, It looks fantastic! Like a diamond Band-Aid. I've never bought myself a diamond. You have to be careful in those stores with the dazzling windows. I was thinking, Maybe I need a diamond ring. (*Yawn*) It was closing time, luckily. We got out of there, and the store people immediately put down the iron gates over those windows. Sofia and the others are all going back to Cartier tomorrow, but without me.



Bill Murray

"We were hungry, so we went up to the bar-restaurant on the Eden's roof. What a view! We could see St. Peter's! I felt I could vote for the Pope! The waiter said, 'No food,' in English. 'No food. Drinks.' So we went to another restaurant and the waiter told me to have pasta with little clams and truffles, and I said, '*Sì, sì, perfetto, sì.*' Everything was feeling *perfetto.* After dinner, everybody went back to Sofia's room, and we watched MTV Europe. It was terrible, awful, like funeral music from another planet. We did a lot of jabber for hours, with the awful MTV music in the background, about movies, movies, movies. Then people started falling asleep. *Perfetto.*"

—*Lillian Ross*



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DEPT. OF COINCIDENCE
EXPLAIN THIS ONE

When Scott McClellan, an unassuming thirty-five-year-old Texan, took over from Ari Fleischer as White House spokesman in July, it was clear that there would be no honeymoon with the press. American soldiers were being killed almost daily in Iraq. The federal deficit was growing; the likelihood of finding weapons of mass destruction in Iraq was not. Few, then, would have predicted that McClellan's first and most daunting damage-control assignment would turn out to be his own father.

Like most families, McClellan's has its glories and its embarrassments. His mother, Carole Keeton Strayhorn, who is divorced from his father, is a colorful and powerful political figure in Texas, where she serves as the state's comptroller. Before that, she was the mayor of Austin. Her longtime political alliance with the Bushes undoubtedly helped her son land a job as the spokesman for George W. when he was governor of Texas. McClellan's brother Mark is the commissioner of the Food and Drug Administration, in Washington. McClellan's father, Barr, a writer and business consultant now living in Gulfport, Mississippi, also has an abiding interest in Texas politics, as well as a flair for producing mystery dramas at local theatres. Now the senior McClellan appears to have combined these talents by writing an ostensibly nonfiction book titled "Blood, Money & Power: How L.B.J. Killed J.F.K.," which will be published later this month. As the title suggests, Barr McClellan, the father of the White House spokesman, is charging that a previous President from Texas, Lyndon B. Johnson, ordered the assassination of President John F. Kennedy.

Reached by phone last week at his home in Gulfport, Barr McClellan stressed that his theory is based not just on a decade's worth of research but also on his experience, during the sixties, as a young lawyer at Clark, Mathews, Thomas & Harris, the Austin law firm that handled Johnson's business affairs. McClellan's employment at the firm, he acknowledged, ended in a dispute over ethics and fruitless litigation over money. But by the time he left, he said, "I knew L.B.J. well. He was very brutal. I'd seen him in person. I'd been in Austin many years, and I knew a good bit about him." McClellan contends that when Kennedy was killed "everyone suspected there was a conspiracy, but they didn't know how it worked. This is the inside story."

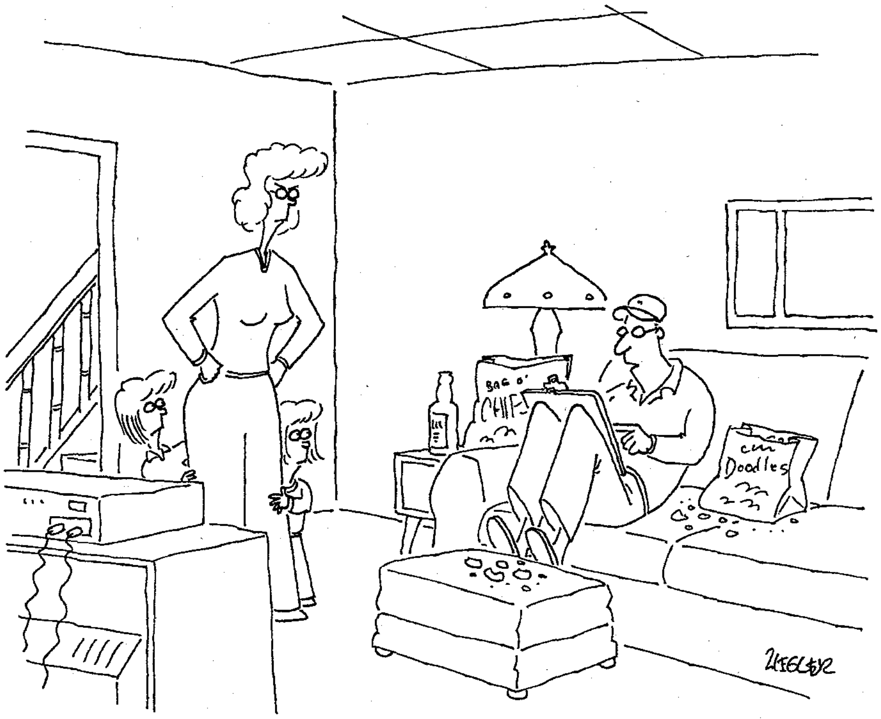
McClellan said that when he joined the law firm, in 1966, another young lawyer at the firm told him that one of the senior partners, Edward Clark, had "arranged" the assassination. The motive, McClellan says, was money and power. After the assassination, he claims, Clark collected millions of dollars from oil and gas companies in Texas whose businesses were supposedly benefitting from having Johnson in the White House. Clark died in 1992, with a reputation as Johnson's closest and most indispensable ally in the state. Robert Caro, in the first volume of his three-part biography of Johnson, says that Clark, who had been the Texas Secretary of State, was, "of all the men Johnson met in Austin," the one "who would, over the long years to come, acquire and hold the most power."

Caro was one of several reputable Presidential historians who last week opted not to pass judgment on McClellan's book. But G. Robert Blakey, a professor at Notre Dame Law School, who served as the chief counsel for the House Select Committee on Assassinations (and who believes that there was probably a second gunman), dismissed the L.B.J. scenario as "highly implausible." He pointed out that Johnson was in the motorcade that day. "You'd have to believe he paid someone to fire at a car in front of him, knowing the potentiality for a gunfight. What rational person would draw gunfire down upon himself?"

Eric Parkinson, the president of Hanover House, the book's publisher, in Arkansas, said that he was "squeamish at first" about McClellan's findings. "It was a difficult decision to go forward," he said. "But it was too important a piece of history not to publish. In comparison, everything else seems like fluff."

Over at the White House, Scott McClellan may have had other descriptive nouns in mind, but evidently he is loath to say anything. So far, he has declined to comment about his father. This may get harder, however, as the weeks go by. "The interesting thing," his father said, somewhat mischievously, "is that he's getting married in Austin on November 22nd"—the fortieth anniversary of Kennedy's assassination.

—*Jane Mayer*



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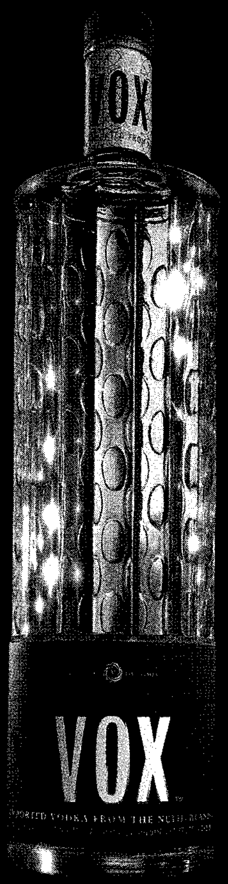

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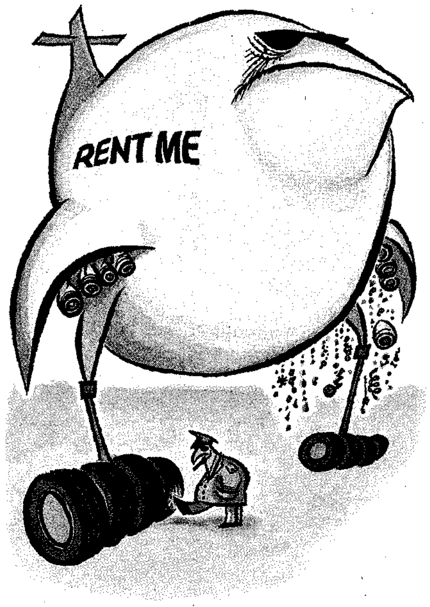
THE FINANCIAL PAGE
AIM HIGH

Once upon a time, Americans believed that they should buy only what they could pay for. Debt was seen as dangerous, even immoral. This changed in the nineteen-twenties. Amid a boom in mass-produced consumer goods—washing machines, radios, couches, cars—people saw the appeal of buying on the installment plan. Retailers sang the virtues of "deferred payments you'll never miss," which made it "easy to get these things, right now when you need them." By the end of the decade, buying certain goods outright was for fussbudgets and nabobs.

The democratization of credit was clearly a wonderful thing. But it had certain consequences that retailers prefer not to mention. Buying on the installment plan is almost always more expensive. ("No money down" means "a lot more money later.") Generally speaking, if you have the money you're better off paying cash. People who buy couches on the installment plan tend to be people who can't afford them up front. This is why so many rent-to-own stores are in poor neighborhoods. And slicing a debt into incremental payments makes it easy to disguise just how big that debt is. (How else could rent-to-own stores stay in business?) If easy credit sometimes leads people to make reckless decisions, it's even more dangerous for governments, which constantly wrestle with the temptation to buy stuff today and make someone else pay for it tomorrow.

Apparently, the Air Force never got the memo. It's now trying to close a deal with Boeing in which it will lease a hundred planes to use as refuelling tankers for six years. Then, presumably, it will buy them. (It needs the approval of the Senate Armed Services Committee before it can sign the contracts.) The Congressional Budget Office estimates that simply purchasing the planes would cost sixteen billion dollars. Leasing and then purchasing them will cost at least six billion more. So why, when the defense budget is close to half a trillion dollars, is the Air Force acting like a deadbeat shopping for a couch at a Rent-a-Center?

In part, it's a familiar story of corporate welfare in the "iron triangle" (Congress, defense contractors, the Pentagon). The deal was conceived almost two years ago, in some measure as a handout to Boeing, which was struggling after September 11th. It was slipped into a congressional appropriations bill at the last minute, without any congressional hearings or even a formal request from the Air Force. And though it had come under withering criticism from the Congressional Budget Office, the General Accounting Office, lawmakers like John McCain, and numerous taxpayer watchdog groups on the left and the right, it survived, helped along by the ardent lobbying campaign of Boeing and its congressional allies (again on the left and the right). And the Air Force official with whom Boeing was negotiating the deal last year left this year to work for, yes, Boeing.



ARNOLD ROTH

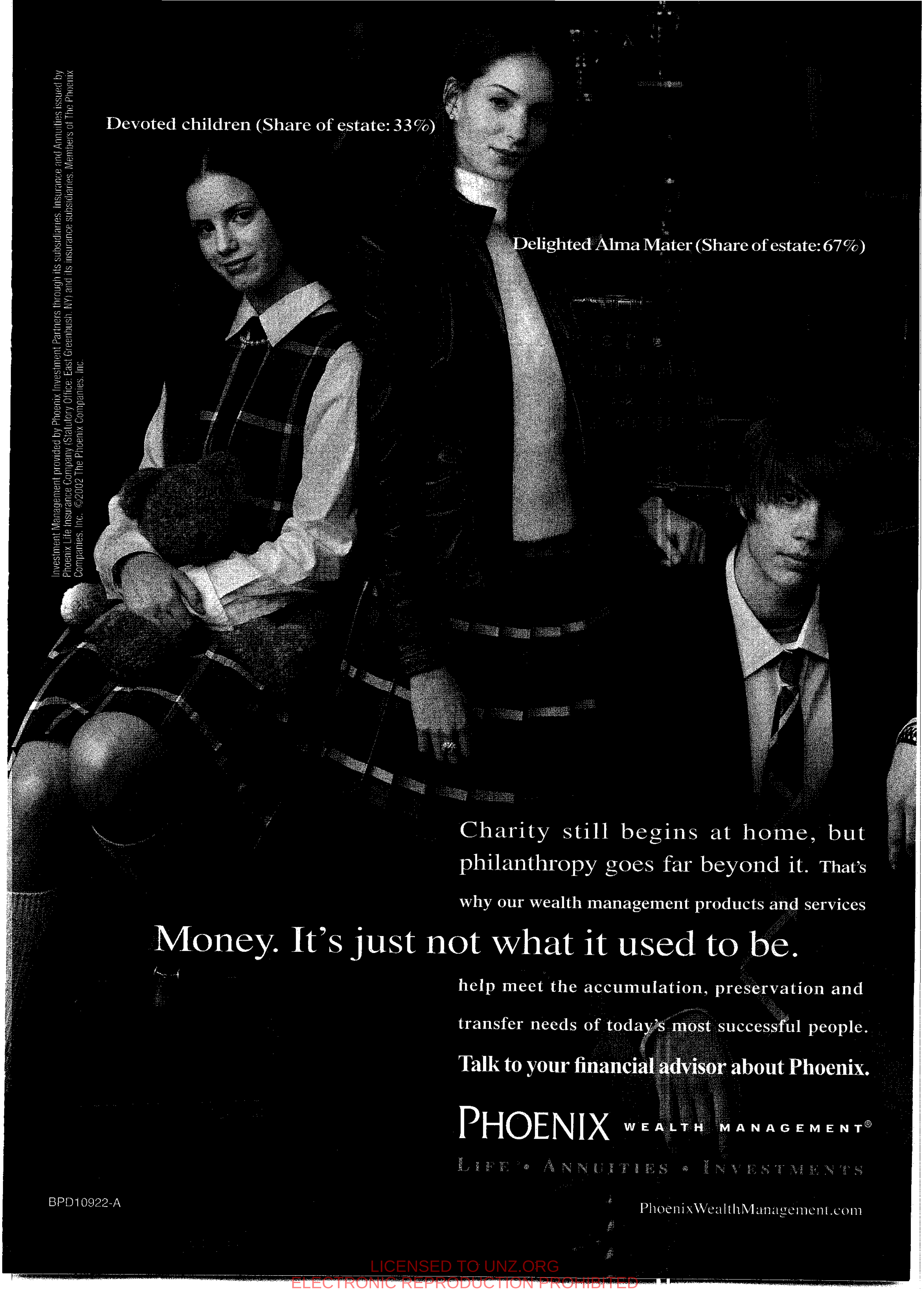
What makes this deal distinctive is that the Air Force wants to lease the planes rather than buy them. Leasing a car makes sense if you want a new one every few years. But that logic doesn't apply to these tankers. After all, many of the tankers that the Air Force has now have been in use for forty years. So the Air Force will either spend more than sixteen billion dollars leasing planes that it will then give back to Boeing (leaving it without the tankers it says it so desperately needs) or spend much more than that to lease and then buy them. (As a congressional aide said last week, "If it looks, walks, and talks like a lease-purchase, it is a lease-purchase.") Wouldn't it make more sense just to buy the tankers right now for sixteen billion?

It would, unless you wanted to have the tankers now and pay for them later. To buy them outright, the Pentagon would have to allocate money from its budget, which would mean cutting some other program or coming clean about the bill it was racking up. No one wants to do that. But with a lease the Air Force gets its tankers and everything else. It's really little more than an accounting gimmick, the kind of sleight of hand that corporate America indulged in during the nineties, to its enduring embarrassment.

The problem, of course, is that eventually the tankers will have to be paid for. The Air Force seems to think that paying later will be easier. It won't. A decade from now, when the bill is due, the Air Force will be spending tens of billions of dollars to buy a fleet of new Joint Strike Fighters, while the federal government as a whole will be wrestling with the aging of the baby boomers and with trillions in additional debt. By then, the people now running the Pentagon won't be around: paying for the tankers will be someone else's problem.

The plan's advocates claim that green-eyeshade nitpicking has no place in discussions of national defense. But every extra dollar we waste leasing tankers is a dollar we can't spend on something else. (For starters, with the money a straight purchase would save, we could buy another thirty-five tankers.) Somehow, those involved with the tanker deal have done their best to perpetuate the illusion that something can be had for nothing. That should sound familiar, because it's in tune with the way the Bush Administration and Congress have increased spending while slashing taxes (guaranteeing huge long-term deficits), and the way the White House downplayed the potential costs of the war in Iraq. Even the eighty-seven billion dollars in extra military spending that the President requested earlier this month is starting to look like a low, low down payment. Cross defense-industry cupidity with fiscal stupidity, and you get the makings of a terrible mess. Beware the military-procrastination complex.

—*James Surowiecki*



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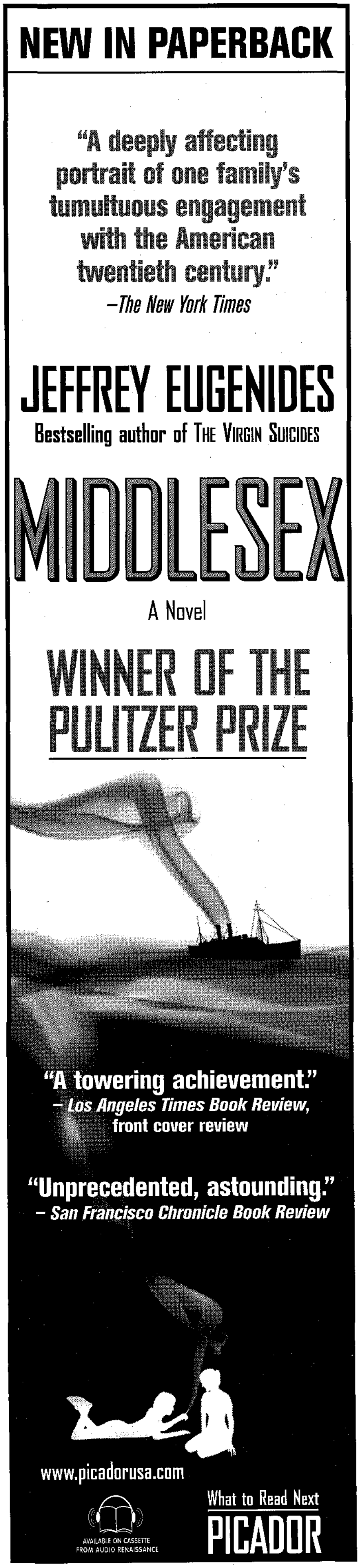

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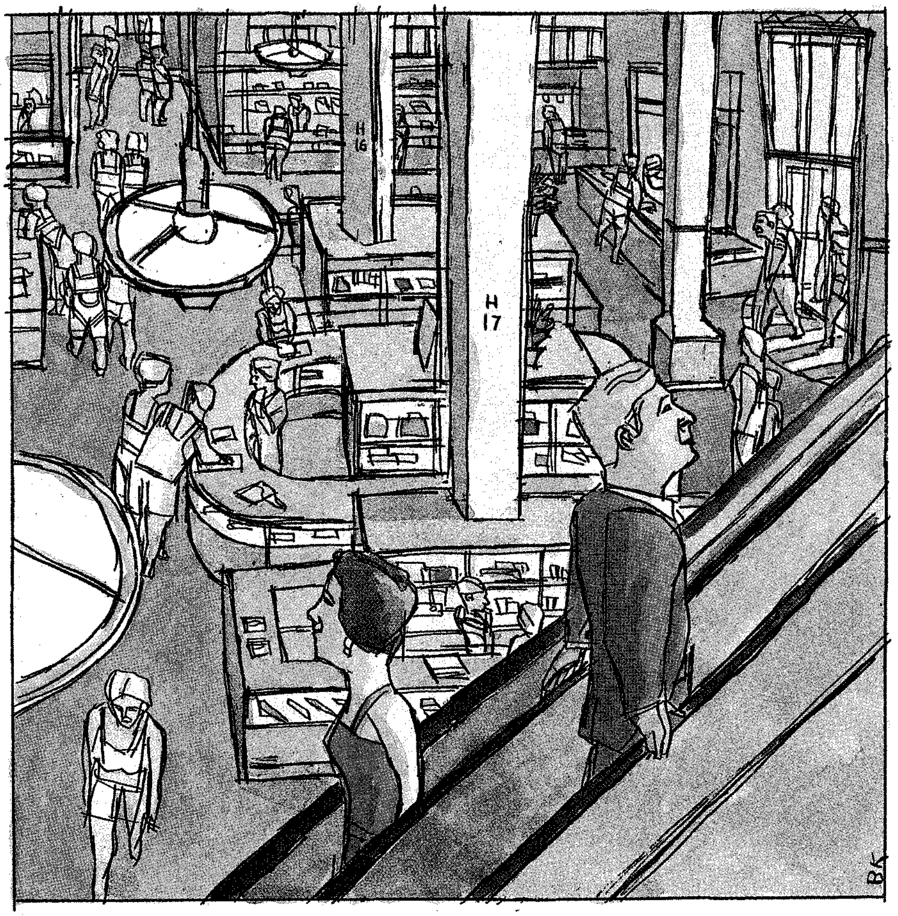
NEW YORK JOURNAL

UNDER ONE ROOF

The death and life of the New York department store.

BY ADAM GOPNIK

The great department stores of New York lie on the avenues now like luxury liners becalmed in a lagoon, big ships in shallow water. All around them, the dhows and junks and speedboats of the new national retailing, Staples and Victoria's Secret and Banana Republic and the Gap, honk at them and insult their sisters and get in their way. (And the newcomers hunt in pairs, so that no Duane Reade appears without a Starbucks nearby, no Staples without a Victoria's Secret minding its rear, as though the urge to tickle your husband and the urge to buy discounted stationery goods, the urge to caffeine and the urge to Coricidin were twinned deep in the desire system of the brain.) Saks and Bergdorf and Bloomingdale's, immense and slow, look down at them and try to continue on a stately course, but the water is ebbing from around their keels.



The old department store implied a rhythm of time, a pace purposeful and expansive.

BEN KATCHOR

Our sense of this, our mental image of it, is real, and grounded in what we read—just this summer, Lord & Taylor, whose New York store is the southernmost ship of the Fifth Avenue fleet, and which is owned by the May Company, lost nearly four thousand employees and thirty-two sister stores, and was sent back to dry dock to be remade, nothing left but its signature. "Lacklustre upon lacklustre" is how a Piper Jaffray analyst describes the department-store sector. The professional retail trade papers worry about the disappearance of the department store exactly as the theatre people worry about Broadway. But the decline is also intuitive, and grounded in what we feel about the city. As recently as the early nineties, when Bloomies almost fell and women wept, department stores still mattered; they mattered as talk shows mattered then, as cable news matters now. One day we feel that something is big, and the next day we know that it is not. Without even looking at a receipt, we know somehow that the romance of the department store is fading, and we wonder what life will be like when it is gone.

Some of the department stores in town are in good shape—chiefly those which have been narrowly redefined as upscale clothing stores with small secondary lines in furniture and cosmetics. The seventh floor of Bergdorf Goodman hums, the eighth floor of Saks sings, and there are few places that seem more entirely of Manhattan than Fred's at Barneys on a Saturday at noon. But we miss the big stores, because they defined a world, little duchies of commerce, with their faith in literal display: not the cunning and Duchampian show windows of a Simon Doonan but the things themselves shown as the things themselves, *these* shirts, *these* ties—the wooden escalators and crowded elevators, and the ghosts of elevator operators wearing small hats and announcing notions. (There is a beautiful, forgotten song in the old Johnny Mercer show "Top Banana," sung in the elevator of a department store, listing the contents of the floors as though they were poem enough: "Third floor rat-traps and radios, cheesecloth, cupcakes and cameos / Fourth floor peanuts and piccolos / leftover ushers from Loews.")

Lord & Taylor still gives one a sense of the department store as it once was, a last lingering resonance of the old dispensation. It is not a very distant world. The first floor of the store, at Thirty-eighth and Fifth, is laid out sweetly and expectantly, all mirrors and cosmetics; the salespeople in the Clinique department look serious in their white coats, as though actually about to attempt something cliniqual. There are no divisions, no urgency, no one spraying perfume—it is a ground floor seemingly arranged by the hand of God for displaying goods. There are striped men's ties placed like salmon filets and men's shirts hanging like partridge. There are hats. The store plays the national anthem at ten o'clock every morning. On the sixth floor, the restaurateur Larry Forgione has opened a new café, complete with wine by the glass and a sweeping panoramic view of sturdy ladies' coats. The chowder is tasty, the wine decent. But there is something about Forgione himself—someone who has become a brand without ever quite having been a name—that extends the sense of a time warp, another era of hope. The old Lord & Taylor implies a rhythm of time, of women's time, in particular, a pace not slowed but purposeful and expansive: it takes a morning and lunch, or tea and an afternoon, to make a survey of the place, shopping as a setting out rather than a dropping in.

At last, up on the tenth floor, in the men's department, one can find an awe-inspiring demonstration of the sheer numbing stasis that capitalism can achieve—for it is insensitivity to the immediate pressure of the market that separates big-ticket capitalism from the rug bazaar and the vegetable stall. Capital slows down the market and places it within the shell of The Firm, firm in every sense, so that things can linger after their appeal to the market has passed. The brand names are Jack Victor and Grant Thomas, name brands that are neither really names nor really brands, and seem to set off the commercial logic of brand-naming in a twilight zone of pure performance: no one wants to wear Jack Victor slacks, but there they are, hanging in poignant rows, their creases abjectly offered. It is a kind of installation piece: the department store as an abstract exercise in naming and branding and display, without commercial urgency and, mostly, without customers.

To understand the department store's decline, you have to go back to the department store's founding, according to Richard S. Tedlow, a professor at the Harvard Business School who has written a lot on retailing. "The department store began in an era of a hub-and-spoke transportation system for cities, before

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the automobile," Tedlow says. "In Chicago, for instance, the large downtown department store, Marshall Field's, became in and of itself The Brand. And for a store like that in, say, 1870 or 1880, the competition was basically mom-and-pop shops. Department stores were a new mode of retailing. They became destinations—they became places where you shopped not solely for procurement but for entertainment."

At the same time, Tedlow explains, the nature of the transaction changed. Before that, shopping was still done by barter, with each party expecting to be cheated. Department stores had fixed prices. The phrase "Satisfaction guaranteed or your money back" was radical, introducing a new kind of merchandising. As Tedlow says, "The department stores were one of America's first commercial institutions of trust. They worked to take your mind off price."

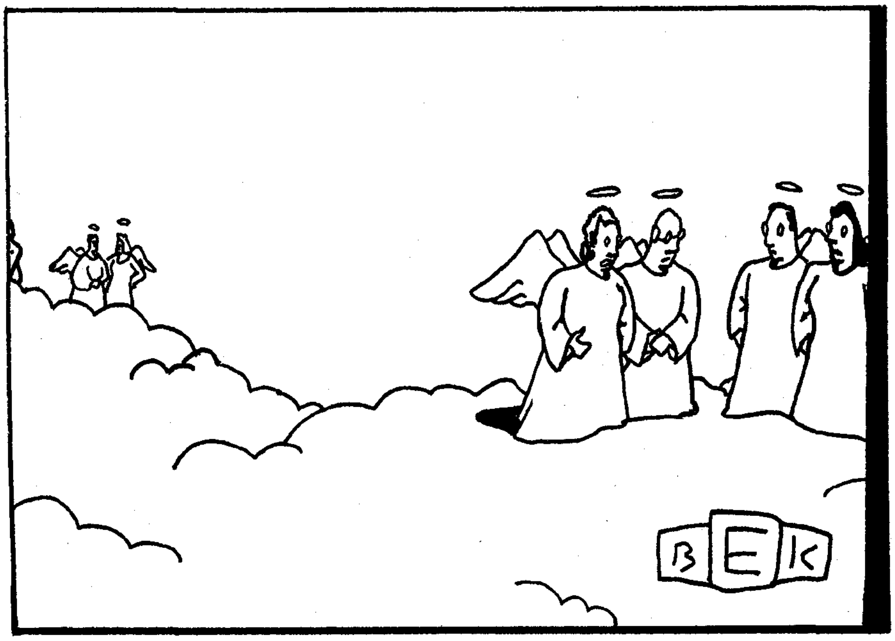
For more than half a century, in New York particularly, department stores presided over everything from Thanksgiving Day parades and patriotic lectures to Cubist exhibitions. John Wanamaker was one of the greatest merchants in America, and his store at Astor Place and Broadway, which had an entrance hall and an art gallery and was said to have more windows than the Empire State Building, was the model and master of the department store as a civic-seeming institution.

Historians of retail will tell you that it was Wanamaker, more than anyone else, who transformed the department store from a place where women bought stuff to a place where they simply and necessarily went, the way people had once wandered into and out of church. With the usual acceleration of New York retailing, the zone of the stores moved uptown with astonishing speed: the cast-iron Ladies' Mile of department stores, between Eighth and Twenty-third Streets and between Broadway and Sixth Avenue, reigned for a generation before it was replaced by Fifth Avenue farther uptown. But the continuity of purpose, and even of names, was there.

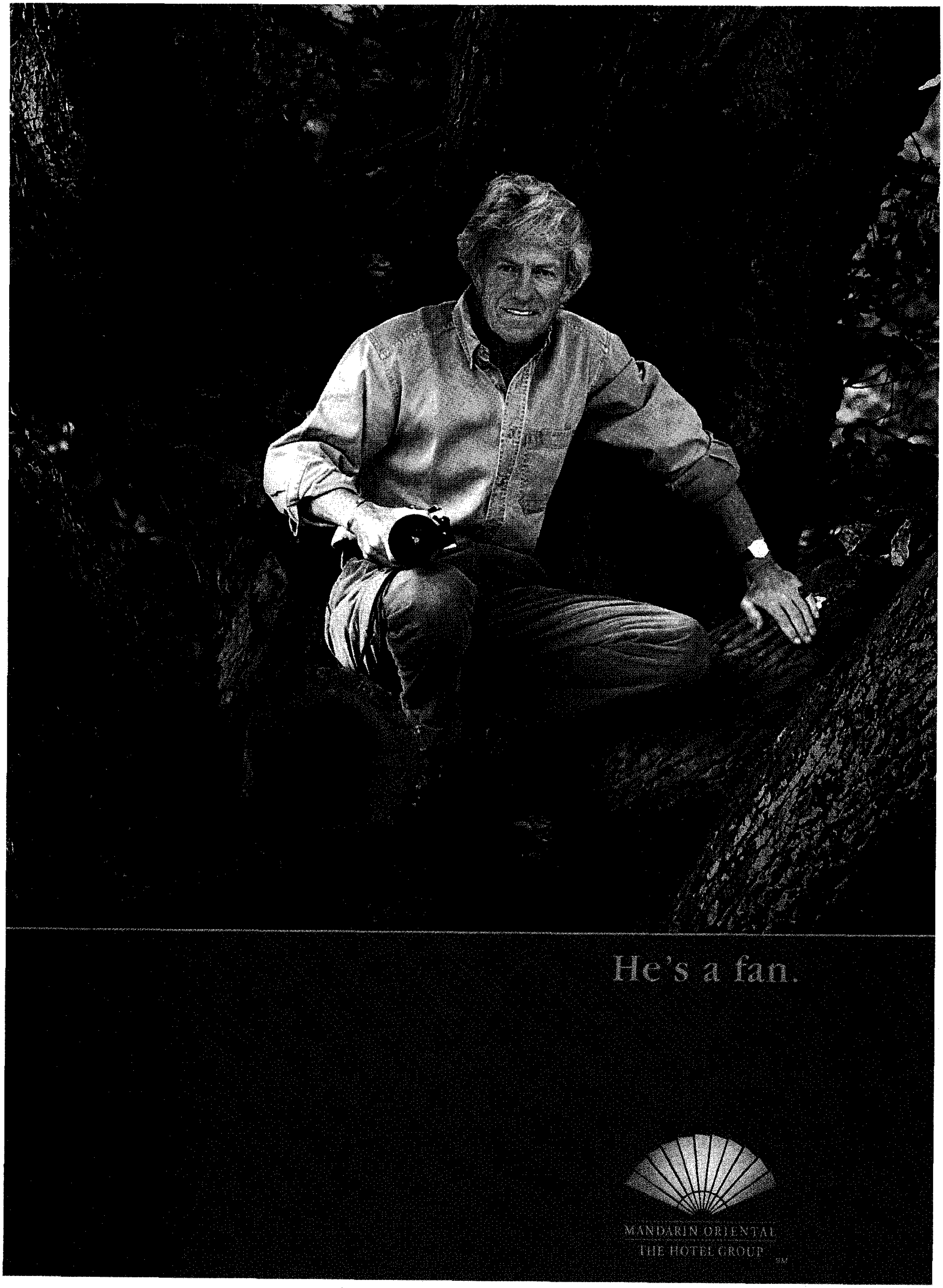
Tedlow dates the beginning of the decline to the period just after the Second World War, when what seemed at first to be a great gift to the growth of the department store—the mall—first appeared, in places like Minneapolis and Kansas City. The spatial arrangement of the department store within the mall, he thinks, helped spell its doom. "Malls depended on being anchored by two department stores, one at either end," he says. "What's in between those two stores? Small stuff at first. But eventually there's a Gap, a Limited, a Banana Republic. By going out to the malls and anchoring them, these department stores created traffic for a great many specialty stores that otherwise would have had a hard time creating any demand—essentially because they couldn't afford the advertising, which is a necessary cost of doing business in a department store. The boutique businesses could attack the department store from the safety of the shadow of the department store. What has replaced the department store is the mall itself, which now plays the role of amusement place and social center."

Another revolution in retailing began with sharp competition in price—making Wal-Mart by far the biggest retailer in the country. Then came the heavily advertised national boutique brand, bringing a Victoria's Secret and a Gap to every mall. The department stores fought back by attempting to re-create the mall environment of boutiques within each store. But, by bringing in the boutique, by building the idea of the brand, they created an appetite for true brands. A Bloomingdale's filled with boutiques is not so much a brand of its own as a street filled with boutiques—which, sooner or later, it comes to resemble.

In other cities, the department store died from undernourishment, from white flight and the death of the inner city. The great Philadelphia Wanamaker's sickened and shrank until it lost, at last, everything but its eagle; it stays on as a minor satrapy of the May empire, ironically re-branded as a Lord & Taylor. In New York, though the physical infrastructure was changing all the time (by the sixties Wanamaker's was merely a memory attached to a mixed-use block), the cultural infrastructure held on. For a period that some now think was a historical bubble, the old patterns of retailing persisted, partly because zoning codes made it hard for the large discount stores to get in, and partly because it was difficult to break down New York shopping habits. When the new retailers arrived, they did on the streets what they had done in the mall. The precincts of New York retailing, Fifth Avenue, Broadway, and SoHo, became, as many people noted, mall-like themselves, with a predictable range of national boutiques and a predictable effect on the department stores, which continued to "make" the neighborhoods, and continued to lose market share. (You



"We're thinking about getting a little pied-à-terre in Hell."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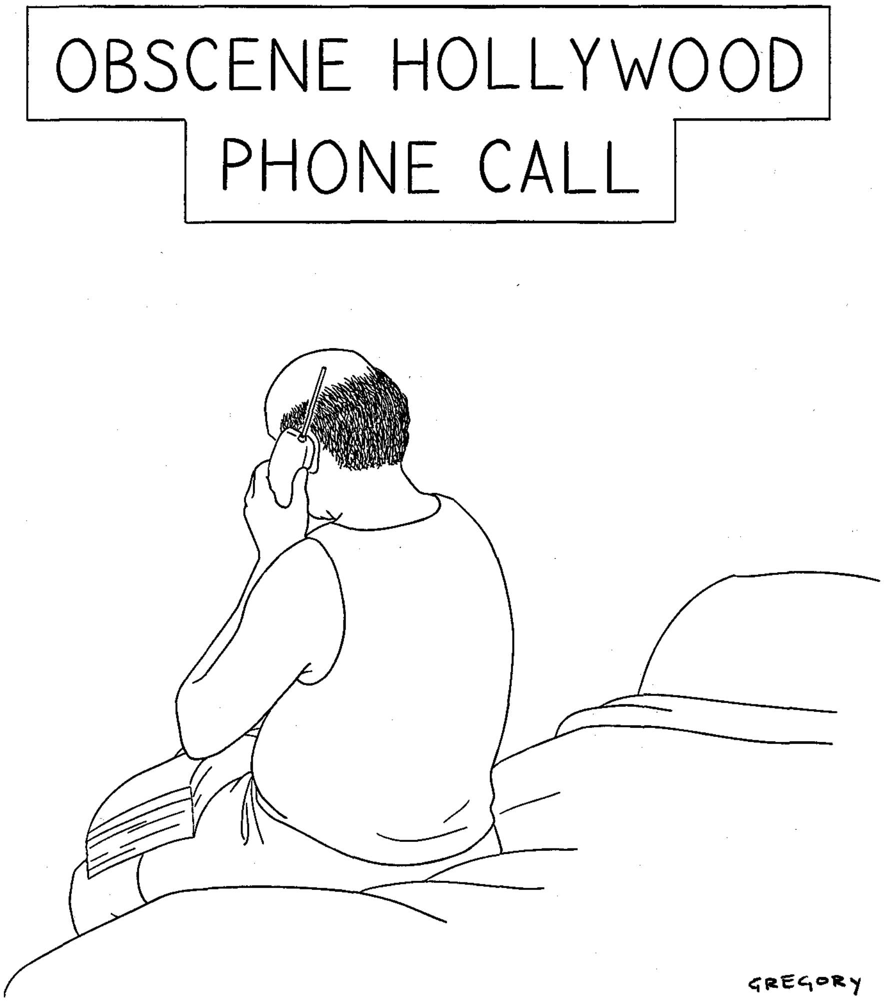


"Who are you wearing right now?"

have to look at Ninth Avenue from Fifty-seventh to Thirty-fourth, or Lexington from Sixty-eighth on up to Ninety-sixth, in order to see what the old environment was like, distinctive and one-off, puppy stores on the first floor, dance studios above, and stores that specialized in sea monkeys neighboring stores that specialized in reggae recordings or kosher pastry.)

Closing a circle begun a century before, the cast-iron palaces of the old Ladies' Mile became home to Bed, Bath & Beyonds and Old Navys and giant Barnes & Nobles. The new retailing had arrived, until, at last, just a few years ago, a Kmart showed up on Astor Place, occupying space, with an irony harder than iron, in the original Wanamaker's. It is a grim place to visit, with its fluorescent glare, its vast area marked but undivided, as though made for surveillance, its anti-theatrical insistences: the stuff is here, and the stuff is as cheap as we can make it, or so these orchestrations suggest.

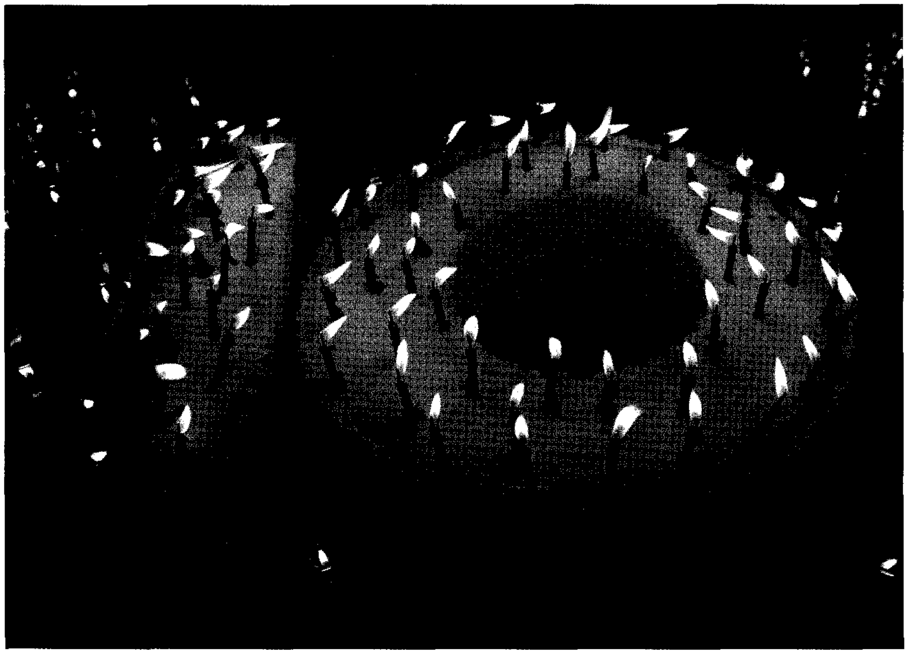
The choice is now between Kmart and Prada, and the institutions that joined them together are finished. We've gone from shopping through trust to a culture of discounting and edge—and edge is the one thing that seems to baffle the department store.

The trouble with the classic business-school account of the decline of the department store is that some version of it has always been true—or has been for at least fifty years, which in retailing is the same as always. "When I was at Harvard Business School in 1949, just after the war, my professor showed us clearly why the department store was dead, and was shocked when I said I wanted to work in one," Marvin Traub says, frostily if genially. It is the second week of August, and the dining room of the Regency at seven-forty-five is filled with the great merchants of New York. They wear Italian suits, tropical-weight wool, but wool all the same, and gleams of sweat appear as they walk from limo to booth, and become gleams of virtue. All of them stop to genuflect to Traub, the godfather of the New York department store. In the nineteen-fifties, he started work in the bargain basement of a department store on Lexington Avenue and turned it into Bloomies, and even now, a dozen years since he left, his legend compels retailers to bow to the older man with the single red thread of the Legion d'Honneur in his buttonhole.

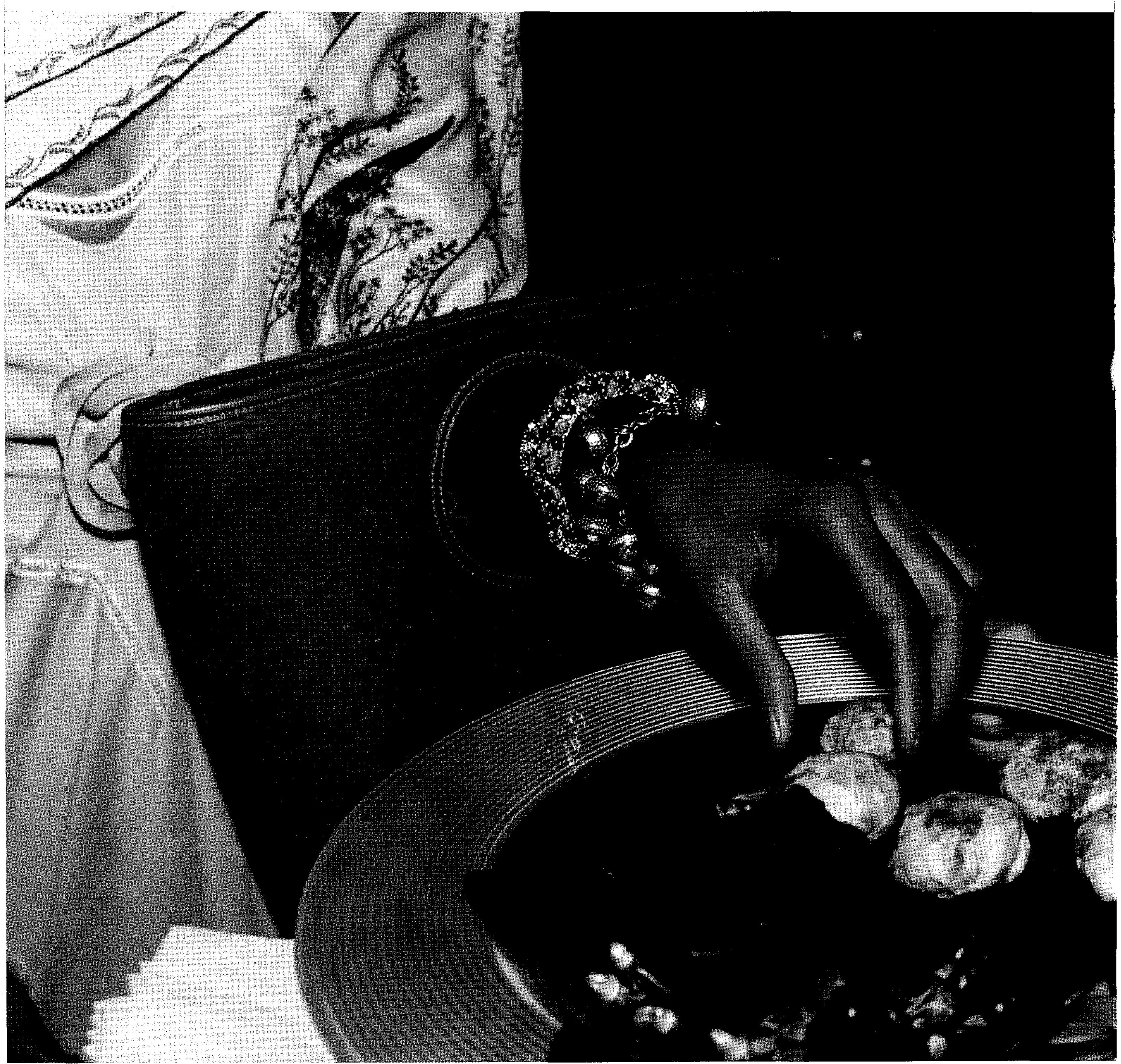
Traub thinks that there is no problem of the department store that a good merchant can't solve. He uses the word "merchant" in an old-fashioned way, as distinct from "businessman" or "salesman"—"and he's a fine merchant, too," he will say, of some protégé now enmeshed in the upper reaches of a giant retail firm, and he means, clearly, not merchant as in "merchandise" but merchant in an almost medieval sense, as one might say "monk" or " summoner" or "pardoner," an ancient calling, not a job. A businessman is someone who knows how to make money, where he doesn't care, and a salesman is someone who knows how to sell, what hardly matters, but a merchant is someone with a gift for where and what—the specifics and particulars are the whole of his craft. He is himself a shopper of the higher kind, a man who knows how to order his shop. (It is a significant distinction: Wanamaker himself always said that he was a merchant, not a capitalist.)

"The department store is a function of its leaders," Traub says. "All the great department stores had great merchants at their head: Stanley Marcus at Neiman Marcus, Adam Gimbel at Saks Fifth Avenue. Each one had a vision and an understanding of the connection between the department store and the shopper, and that connection is emotional and even theatrical.

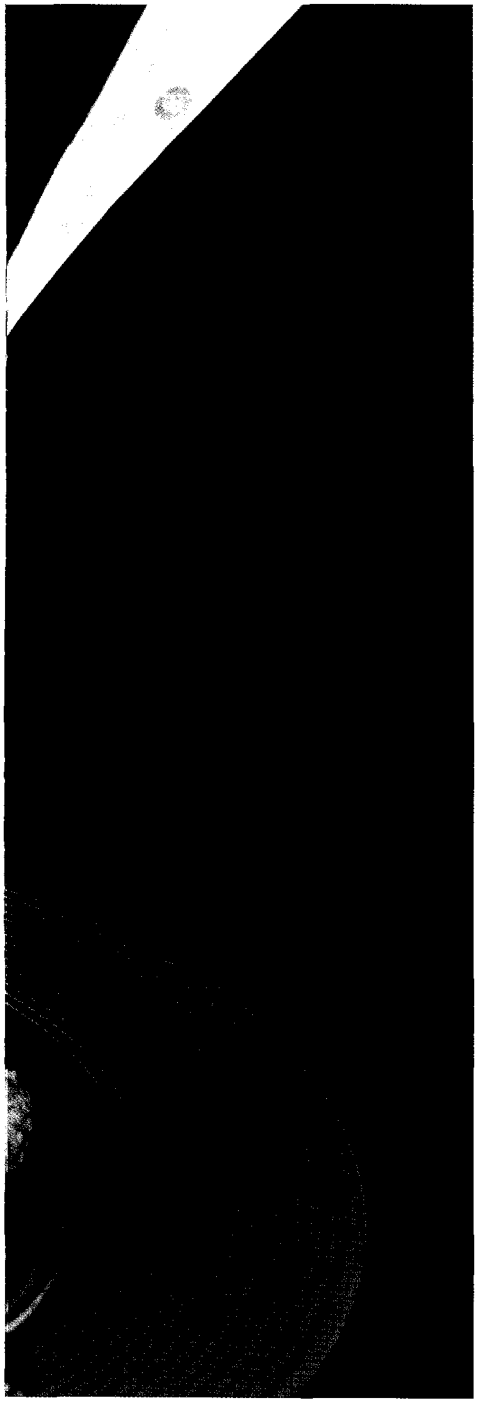
"The first thing that happened to damage the department store was that the role of the buyers was diminished. In the fifties and sixties, to be a buyer

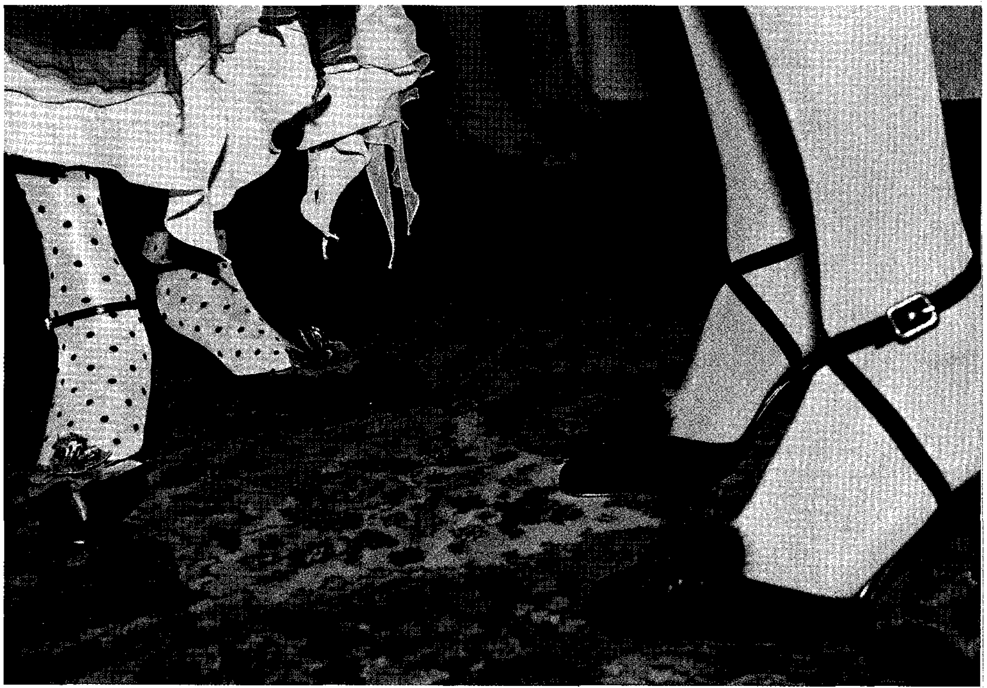


WE ALL DRESSED IN GIDDY FINERY. TALK BUBBLED. DEAR FRIENDS CLASPED HANDS AND RAN THROUGH THE CROWD. A CRAZY JUMBLE OF BAGS AND COATS ON THE CHESTERFIELD. IT WAS GOOD TO SEE EVERYONE. WE HAD TO SHOUT TO BE HEARD, BUT NO ONE CARED A FIG. THE SNAP OF CLOSING LIPSTICKS AND CLUSTERED SECRETS IN THE LADIES' ROOM. ATTEMPTS AT SPEECHES WERE MET WITH SHOWERS OF ICE CUBES. AFTERWARDS, THERE WAS THE MELANCHOLY OF OVER. CRUMPLED LINEN NAPKINS AND FROSTING ON PLATES. WE SAT AND TALKED ABOUT EVERYTHING THAT HAD HAPPENED. TEN YEARS. HOW QUICKLY IT WENT BY.

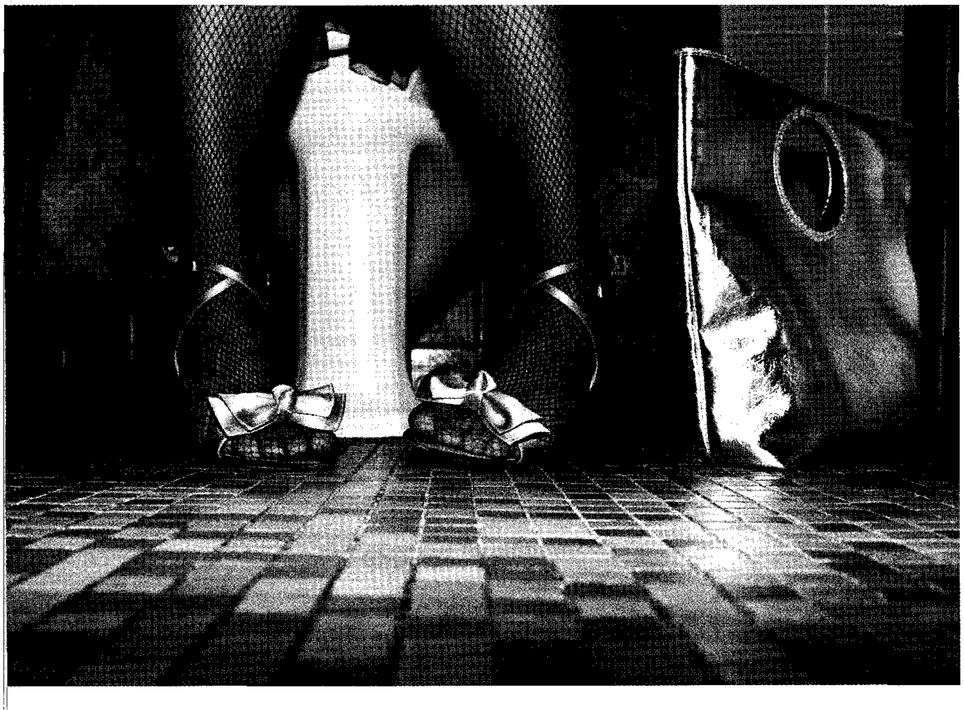


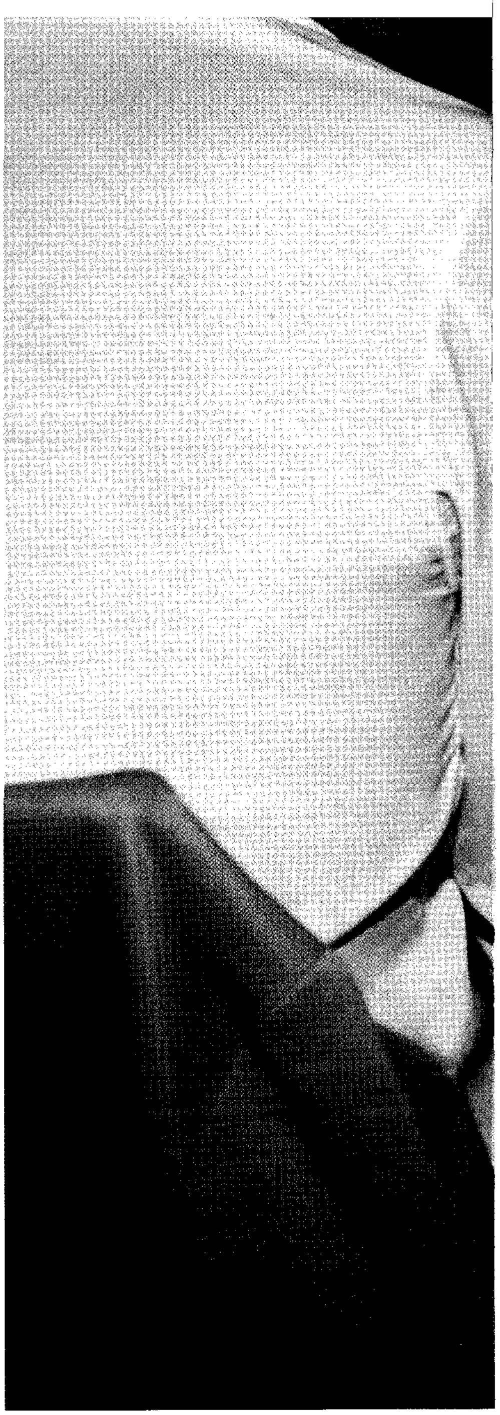
ALL OF US, THE HOOLIGANS AND HOYDENS WE ONCE WERE, NOW FEELING SOMEHOW GROWN, AT HOME IN THE WORLD. BLAZING AND





WHATNOT. EXPLORERS, DABBLERS, IMPRESARIOS, LOVERS, ECCENTRICS, THE INITIATED, THE INURED. OUR OWN LITTLE ARCHIPELAGO.





OUTSIDE, IT WAS TEEMING. WE PILED INTO CABS, PERSUADING THE DRIVERS TO LET US SIT ON LAPS. THE DOG WAS GLAD TO SEE

US WHEN WE GOT HOME, SKIDDING TOWARDS US ON THE LACQUERED FLOOR. WE DIDN'T GO TO BED UNTIL FOUR. HOW COULD WE?

kate spade

DECADE

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at Bloomingdale's or Saks was a highly prestigious and highly important job. Buyers felt passionately about their work, and they knew their clientele, intimately. They knew their sizes and insecurities and they could sense instantly what to buy from a vender."

The buyers, many of them women, were an élite group; Doris Salinger, J.D.'s sister, was a designer-clothing buyer at Bloomingdale's. "Nowadays, of course, no ambitious person would stay as a buyer for any length of time," Traub says. "It would be regarded, understandably, as merely a stop on the way to an executive position. The buying is all done at the corporate level, and so the connection between the customer and the product is damaged. They order from the central headquarters with, say, twenty to thirty per cent for the individual store. The department store depends on trust and belief, and if you knock down the reasons for belief, you damage it."

At the heart of Traub's complaint, and his diagnosis, though, is the now quaint-sounding problem of short-termism. Stock price dictates value, and quarterly profits determine stock price, so, where the department store's construction of trust and emotional connection depends on having areas of the store that are profit centers, and areas that lead you to the profit centers, the short-termer dreams only of profit centers. "What is a department store?" Traub asks rhetorically. "It's simple: it's a place where you can get everything under one roof. Books and *fraises des bois,* dishwashers and Prada bags, everything under one roof. That was the excitement of the department store." Little by little, he explains, the things that were not profitable have been shed, and these are precisely the things that conspired to create trust and confidence and an attachment.

"When we flew *fraises des bois* to the Bloomingdale's gourmet shops, it created greater traffic and excitement," Traub says. "And in the long run it's those associations, that sense of event, that help to make a great store. If you're under pressure to create profits throughout the store, then it diminishes opportunities for unique and special things that may not be profitable. Bloomingdale's did not make money flying in the *fraises des bois*, but it appealed to our customers."

"What would you do for a romantic department store today? It wouldn't be the aspirational store we had at Bloomingdale's. Today, for instance, people want computers and electronics and online services, and we need to bring them in. A store that would take in the Web and the Internet would also sell everything. Everything would be under one roof again."

Everything under one roof. The great question in the theory of retailing, one learns as one reads the texts and talks to the mavens, is not "Why buy it?," a question that belongs, if anywhere, to the theory of life, but "Why buy it here?" All merchants try to answer this question by creating a sense of fate. Why buy it anywhere else? Most luxury merchants create this attachment by appealing to the customer's sense of insecurity. (Buy it here and you will be envied and admired.) The discount store does it by appealing to your intelligence. (Buy it here and you will be shrewder than your neighbor.) The department store does it, or did it, uniquely, by appealing to the customer's sense of trust, to a long cycle of safety. Everything can be found, and everything can be returned. You shop at Bergdorf's not because it is cool—no one will know—but because it is yours.

All life in a mercantile society, one sometimes feels, is dedicated to the disguises of wanting. The sin of capitalism, perhaps, is to make wants feel like needs, to give to simple silly stuff the urgency of near-physical necessity: I must have it. The grace of capitalism is to make wants feel like hopes, so that material objects and stuff can feel like the possibility of something heroic and civic. The urge of the great department stores was to hide acquisition as sociability, to disguise acquisitiveness as membership, so that one entered them not as one entered a store—with one eye on the beseeching salesgirl, one hand on the knob of the door, just looking—but as one entered a library or a club: striding in with pleasure. The department store was the cathedral of that material aspiration, and its diminishment leaves us with one less place to go and hope in. ♦

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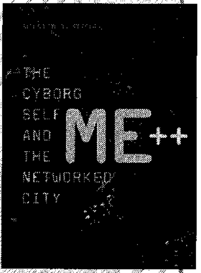

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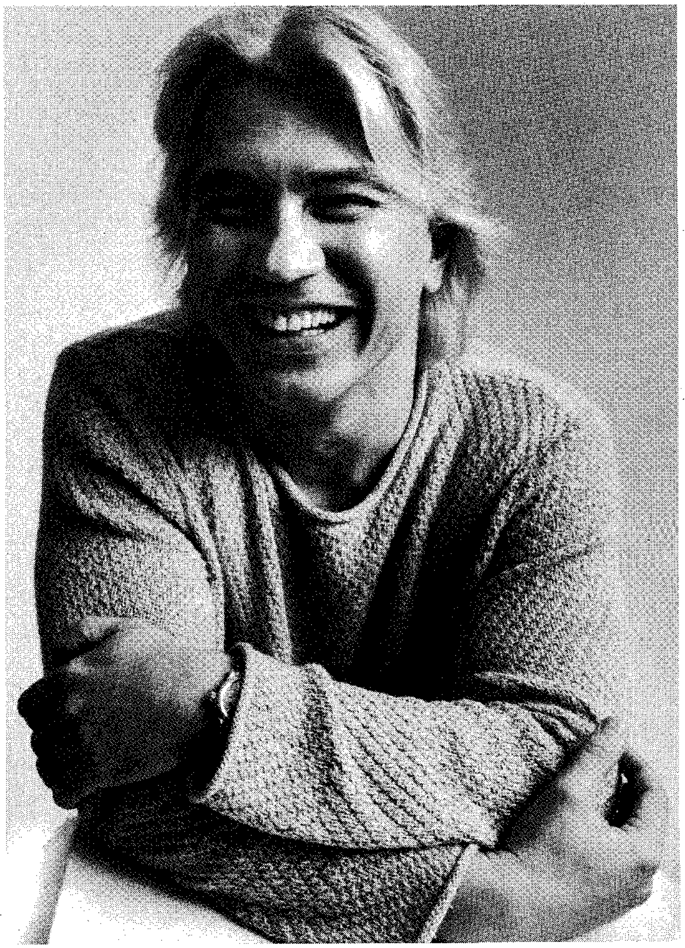
ONWARD AND UPWARD WITH THE ARTS

OUT OF SIBERIA

How a baritone found his way to the Met.

BY FRANCINE DU PLESSIX GRAY

On a typical winter day in central Siberia in the mid-nineteen-eighties, with below-zero temperatures, a young opera star, the twenty-two-year-old baritone Dmitri Hvorostovsky, gave a recital at a bread factory several hours by train from his native town of Krasnoyarsk. Since even in such provincial settings Russian concert protocol demands full regalia, Hvorostovsky, a soprano colleague, and their accompanist had changed into formal dress behind a screen in the unheated auditorium. As the chilled musicians, wreathed in great clouds of their own breath, finished their numbers—Tchaikovsky and some bel-canto arias of Verdi and Bellini—they couldn't help noticing that most of the audience was in tears.



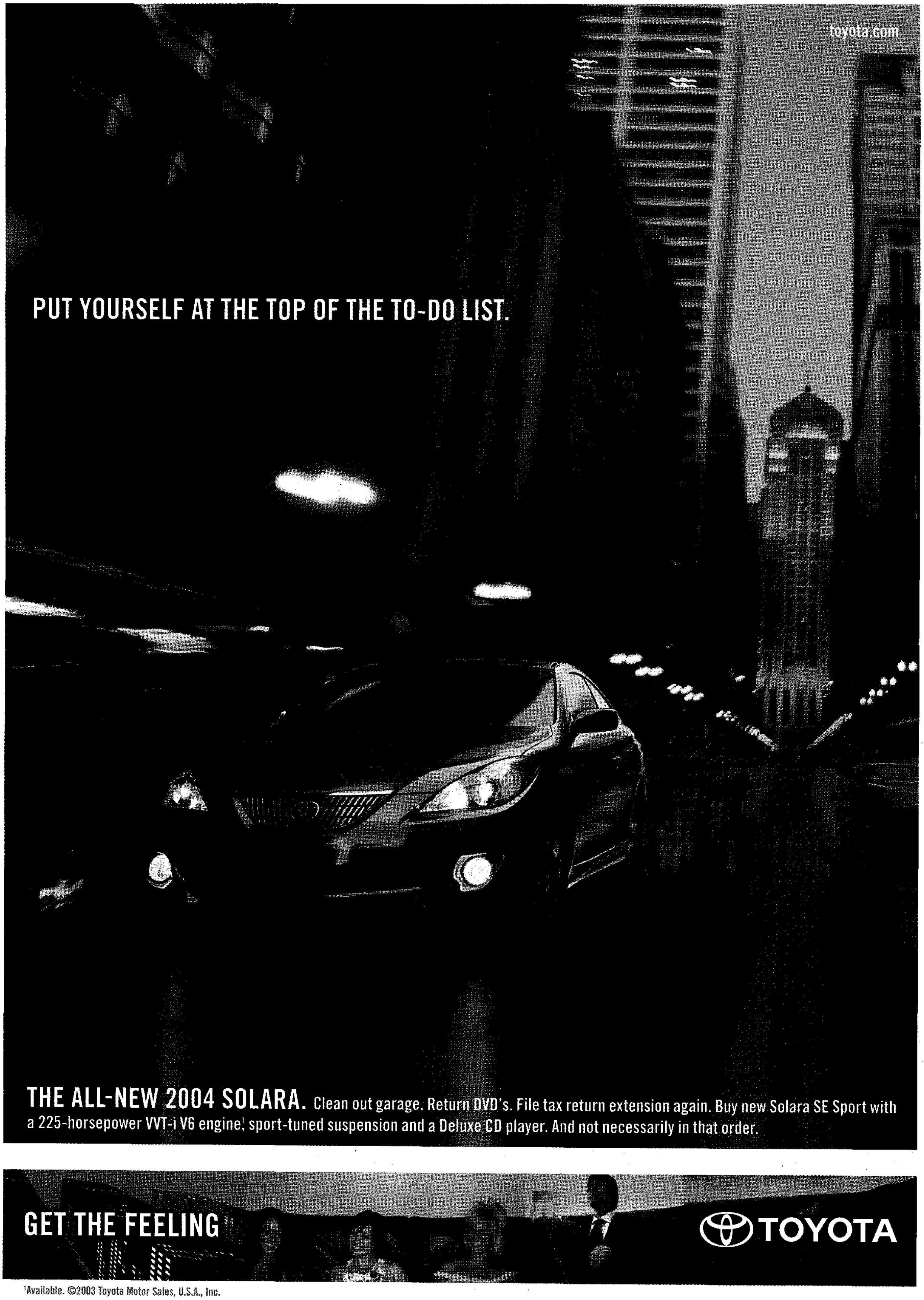
Dmitri Hvorostovsky, June, 2003. Photograph by William Klein.

CONTACT

When Hvorostovsky opens the Metropolitan Opera season, on September 29th, in Verdi's "La Traviata," singing Germont to Renée Fleming's Violetta and Ramón Vargas's Alfredo, he will be celebrating the tenth anniversary of his American stage début, which he made in Chicago in the same role. Yet, after a decade of appearing in the world's grandest opera houses, Hvorostovsky, now forty, still looks back on that performance in the bread factory as one of his most memorable. "The men and women sitting in that audience in their heavy boots and big fur hats had never even heard of Verdi, and their tears were more precious to me than all the applause I could ever get again," he told me recently. "Where else but in Russia would an entire factory stop working at midday to pack a concert hall?" Hvorostovsky has always taken great pride in his compatriots' musical sensibility, and his goal is to establish the same "link of intimacy with every member of the audience" which he achieved that day in Siberia.

Hvorostovsky is a lyric baritone, the highest in the baritone range, bordering on tenor, and his voice has been lauded as "mellifluous," "sumptuously textured," and even "obscenely luscious." ("There have been many beautiful voices, but in my opinion none more beautiful than Dmitri's," Renée Fleming says.) Hvorostovsky is generally acknowledged to be one of the three finest baritones of his generation, along with the American Thomas Hampson and the Welshman Bryn Terfel. He is known for his superbly sculptured legato phrasing (more Italianate than either of those colleagues), his burnished, emotion-charged, distinctive timbre, and his smoldering stage presence. His style has the romantic introspection and brooding intensity associated with the Russian tradition, but his voice is lighter than that of most Slavic male singers, and he has been criticized for not projecting enough volume. He is six feet one and lithe, with high cheekbones and a mane of prematurely silver hair. His eerily beautiful physique has made him "an audience favorite," in the words of Joseph Volpe, the general manager of the Metropolitan Opera—it has certainly lured thousands of women to his performances and to his Web site. But it has not always served his reputation well. On occasion, the press has branded him with epithets—"opera hunk," "the Elvis of Opera"—that belie the industriousness and dedication for which he is noted.

Hvorostovsky, like all opera stars, is a nomadic creature. In recent months, I have seen him perform in New York, Chicago, Paris, and Montreal, and interviewed him in four countries. I first met him on a winter morning earlier this year, the day after I'd seen him sing Renato in Verdi's "Un Ballo in Maschera" at the Lyric Opera of Chicago. I announced myself to the doorman of the apartment complex in which Hvorostovsky stayed for two months that winter and took the elevator to his floor. When the elevator doors opened, he was already standing there, looking like one of the medieval knights who ride across the frozen steppes in Eisenstein's "Alexander Nevsky." I was struck by this specifically Russian courtesy: greeting guests at the elevator door is customary in a country where corridors are often dark and can serve as lairs for marauding



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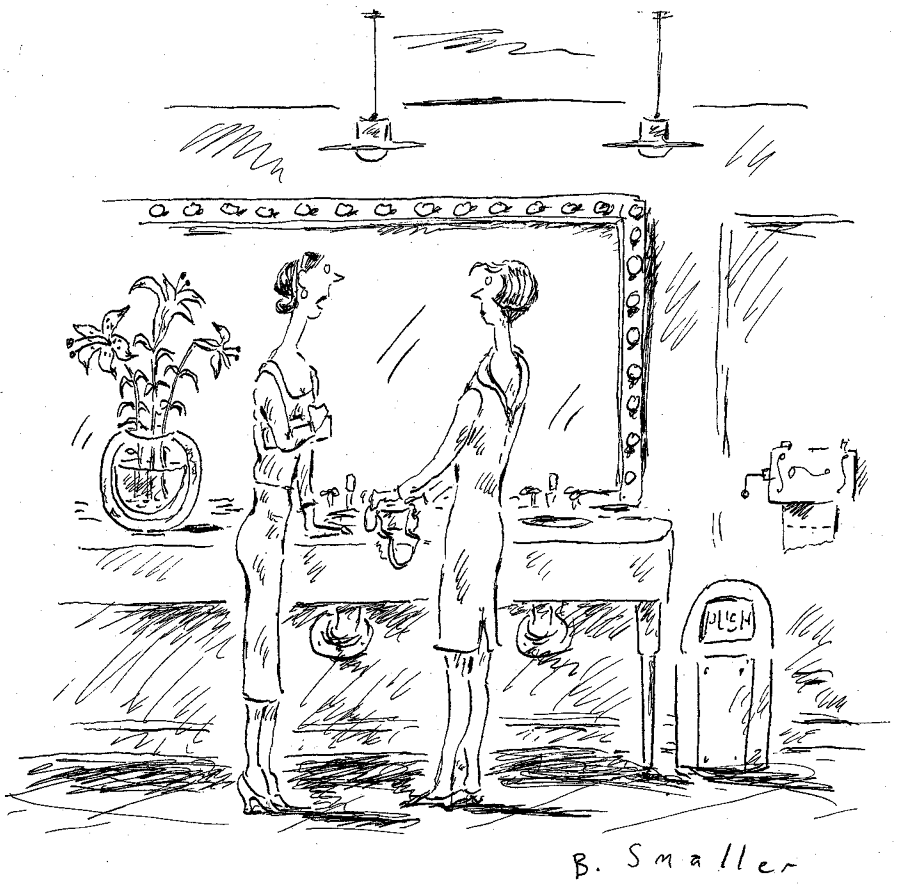
drunks. As we sat down to talk in the living room of an anonymous beige flat, we were joined by Florence, his wife of four years, who was several months pregnant. (Hvorostovsky also has seven-year-old twins from a previous marriage.) A soprano of Swiss and Italian descent, with doe eyes and an abundance of wavy dark hair, she sat attentively in a chair across the room from us, occasionally correcting "Dima" when he got a date wrong.

Hvorostovsky's entire musical education, he told me, took place in Krasnoyarsk, a city of a million, built on the banks of the two-kilometre-wide Yenisey River. Because of its highly classified defense industry, Krasnoyarsk was closed to foreigners until the last years of the Gorbachev era, and throughout his youth, Hvorostovsky said, "all outsiders seemed like Martians." His forefathers, like those of many Siberians, were considered outlaws in the Russian Empire. His paternal great-grandfather had been exiled to Siberia for blowing up a bridge in the abortive revolution of 1905. His maternal great-grandfather was sent there in a chain gang for sheltering a fellow-villager who had murdered a policeman. An only child, Hvorostovsky, like countless Soviet youngsters, was brought up by his maternal grandmother. (His parents, an engineer and a gynecologist, lived in a communal apartment, and his mother's obstetrics practice kept her on twenty-four-hour call.) His grandmother, whose own hair had turned gray when she was in her twenties, had lost her father, a fighter in the Red Army, in the Civil War that began in 1918; her first husband, Hvorostovsky's grandfather, in the Second World War; and her second husband in a train crash. Her third marriage was to a highly decorated war hero who, as the commander of a tank unit in the early nineteen-forties, had seen most of his comrades die in combat. Hvorostovsky's step-grandfather, whom he describes as "vain, arrogant, and deeply alcoholic," slept in the room next to the one that Hvorostovsky shared with his grandmother, shouting and kicking the wall as dreams of the Great Patriotic War haunted his nights.



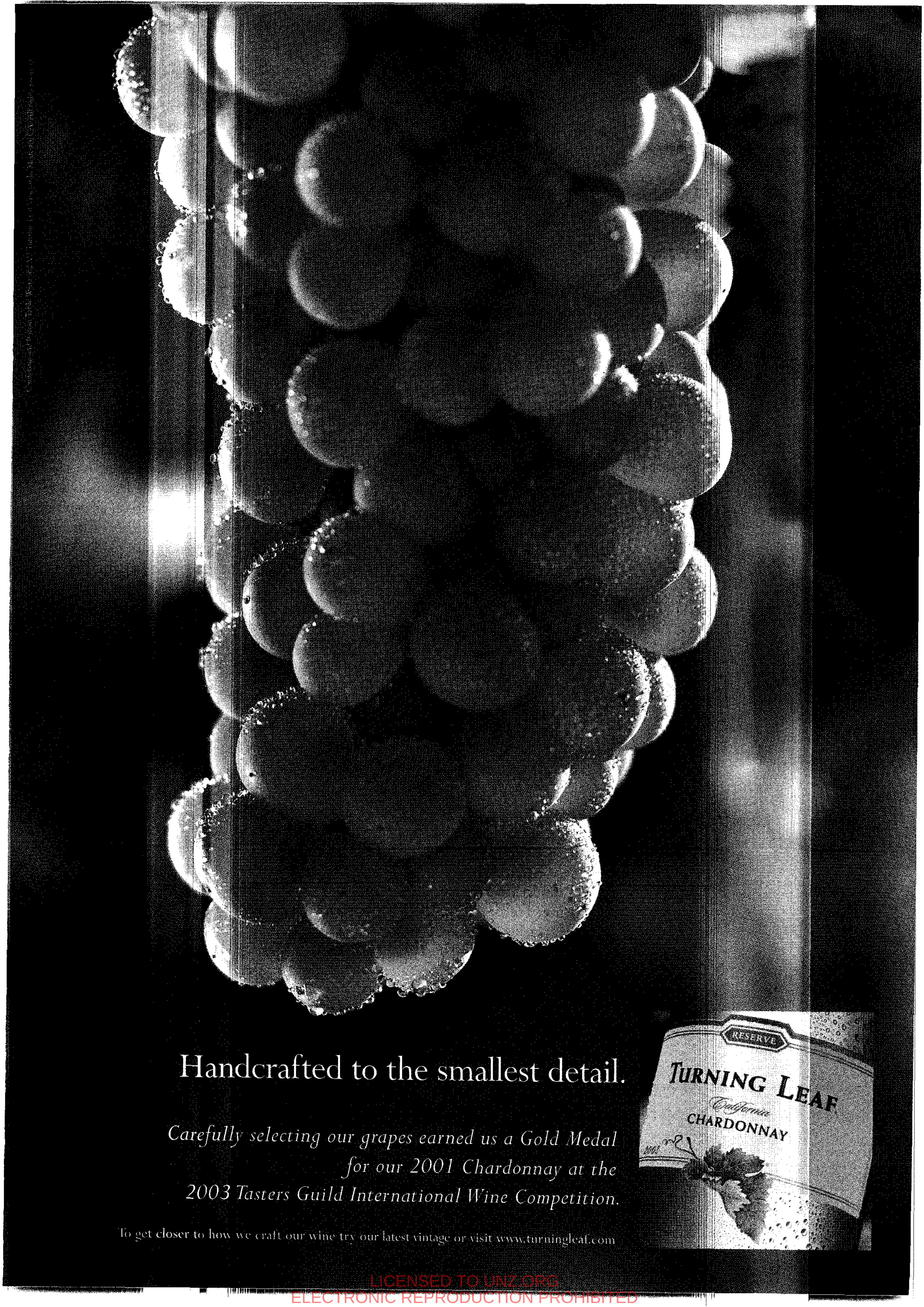
"I can't walk in these shoes, which is a problem, because I can't sit down in this skirt."

Hvorostovsky was close to his parents, and visited them on weekends. His father, Alexander, was a man of substantial musical gifts whose own parents, Communist Party diehards, had prevented him from becoming a musician. Forced to take up engineering, Alexander spent his leisure time singing in amateur groups and meticulously overseeing his son's musical education. "He absolutely redirected all of his own musical ambitions into my career," Hvorostovsky said.

Alexander first hoped that his son would become a pianist, and from the age of seven Hvorostovsky attended music school every afternoon and evening. After the music school ended, when he was fourteen, he started to run with street gangs. "I grew up in a working-class neighborhood," he said. "On weekends, you'd get drunk and get violent—kids fighting, high testosterone, using metal sticks. I started drinking vodka at thirteen. My nose was broken half a dozen times." The popular music he liked best in those days was jazz and rock, and he sang his favorites, from Louis Armstrong to Freddie Mercury, with a local band. "Because in the Soviet Union it was forbidden to have any access to Western decadent art, which we dug a lot, it was the coolest thing among the youngsters of my time," he told me.

At sixteen, Hvorostovsky finished high school, and his father enrolled him in a vocational school that trained young musicians to be choral conductors and music teachers before they entered conservatory. It was through teaching others to sing that Hvorostovsky realized how powerful his own voice had become. "By the age of nineteen, when I got my degrees, I was a fanatic," he said. "I sang constantly, the way a rooster crows. My only dream was to become a big-time opera singer." Hvorostovsky's early experience as a choral conductor made him keenly conscious of the health and hygiene of the voice: he is known as an extremely cautious career planner who refuses half the roles he is offered and never strains his vocal cords with parts that might damage them in any way.

Hvorostovsky is judgmental and very opinionated—even for a Russian—and never more so than when he is discussing roles. He rejects many parts considered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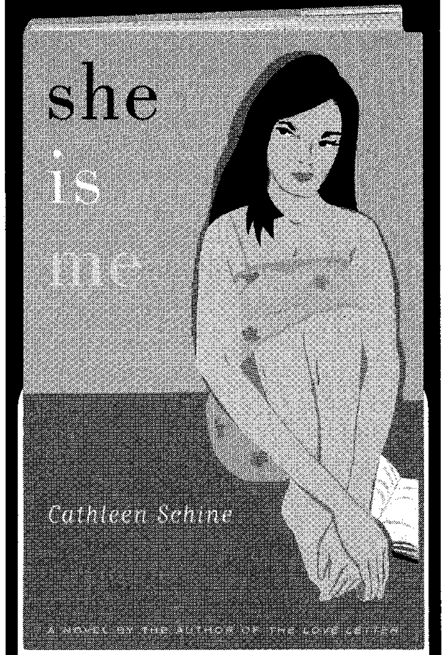
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choice by most baritones. "I will not do Puccini," he said. "Verismo is not my cup of tea." What about Athanaël, in "Thaïs," one of the grand baritone roles? He wrinkled his nose. Massenet is not one of his favorites. Nor has he sung Schubert lieder, declaring, "I prefer to hear Tom"—the baritone Tom Hampson—"sing them." Don Giovanni is de rigueur, but Hvorostovsky is not comfortable with that part, either. "I'm thinking of quitting Don Giovanni forever. It's too low a range for me. It might harm my voice," Hvorostovsky complained to me last winter shortly after his last Giovanni at the Met, which had clearly not been as fine as the "Ballo in Maschera" he was then singing in Chicago. It may be that his voice is still not powerful enough for the role. "Will he ever be able to cut through that thick texture of 'Giovanni' 's last act?" his close friend Francis Rizzo, who has held administrative posts with the Washington Opera and the Spoleto festival, said. "That's anybody's guess—his voice has several more years to grow."

Hvorostovsky's fastidiousness when it comes to his choice of roles was already evident on one of his first trips to Europe, when he was twenty-six. He was called in to audition for the conductor Sir Georg Solti. "You will be my next Iago," Solti said, clearly impressed by Hvorostovsky's gifts. "No, no, maestro," said the young singer, who barely spoke English at the time. "I too, too young sing Iago." To this day, Hvorostovsky has held off from attempting the part, which is notoriously taxing. He has scheduled himself to perform Iago in 2008. "Dmitri's been brilliantly intelligent and prudent about managing his voice," said Sarah Billinghurst, an assistant manager at the Metropolitan, who has observed his career closely for nearly fifteen years. "At the rate he's going, he'll still be singing beautifully into his sixties."

The greatest influence on Hvorostovsky's early career, apart from his father, was Ekaterina Yoffel, his teacher at the Krasnoyarsk conservatory. He studied with her for a few hours a day, five or six days a week. Yoffel—whom Hvorostovsky describes as "powerful, possessive, tough, cynical, and very honest"—placed his voice within the baritone range. She also taught him one of the cornerstones of the singer's craft, breath control. Hvorostovsky boasts that, like Caruso's, his diaphragm muscles are so powerful that when he takes in a breath he can push a piano across a room with them. Many of his colleagues envy this aspect of his technique. "His breath control is far beyond what most of us dream of," Renée Fleming told me.

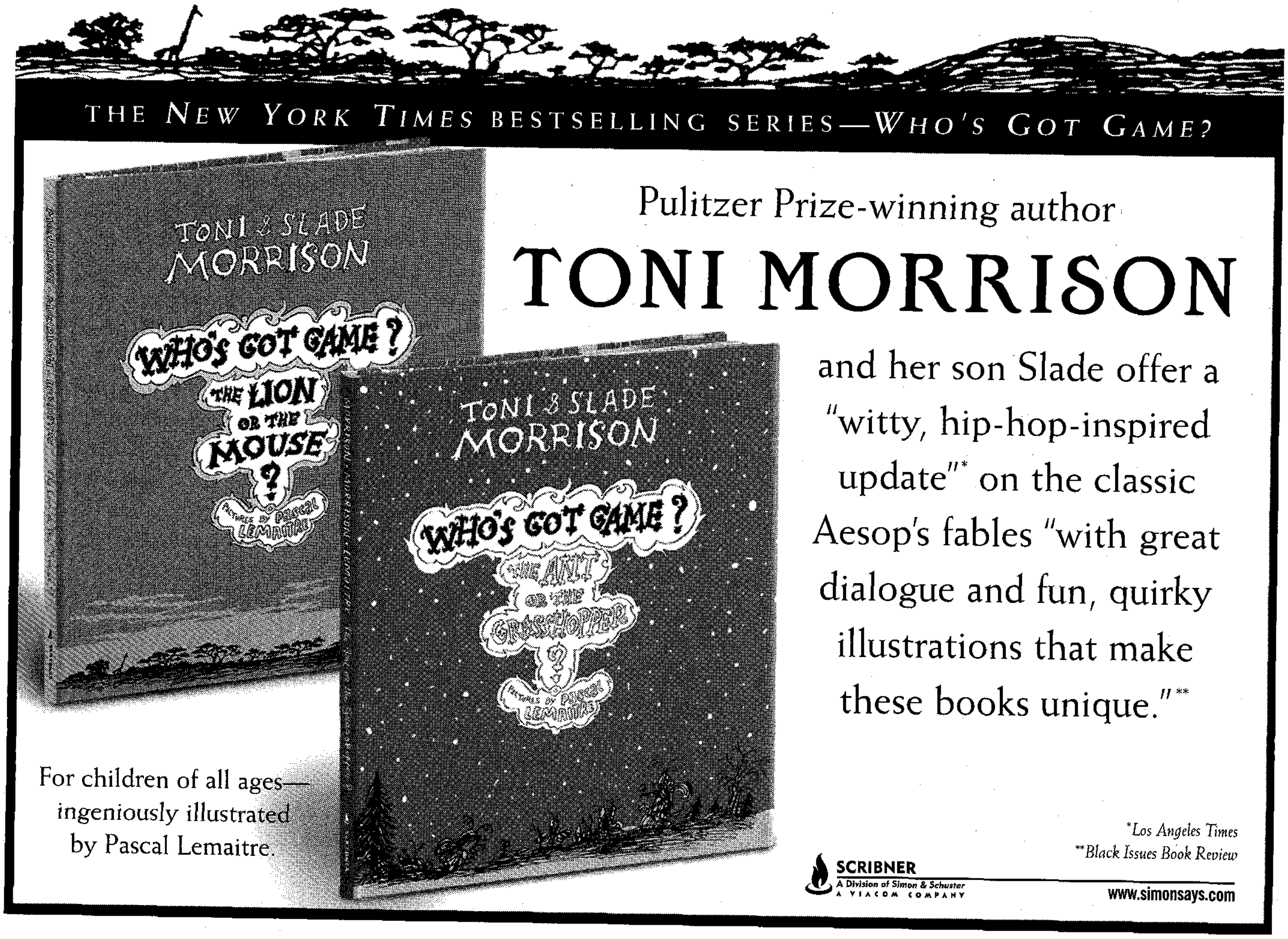
"Even more important," Hvorostovsky said, "Yoffel taught me to use not only my mind but my heart: with her, every note you sang had to have expression." He identifies intensely with his roles, an involvement that he ascribes to Yoffel and to the Stanislavsky method of acting imposed on all aspiring singers in Soviet conservatories. Rigoletto, Renato in Verdi's "Ballo," and Eugene Onegin are the operatic personae to whom he relates most deeply, and in dress rehearsal for these parts, he said, he "can barely keep away the tears." He added, "If I let myself go, I would shout and bellow with pain, and this is precisely where I must restrain myself, rechannel my raw emotion into beautifully crafted musical phrases."

Some say that Hvorostovsky's Don Giovanni lacks the necessary menace; others find that he tosses his mane about too flamboyantly. "He just *exudes* vanity," an operagoing acquaintance of mine groused. But in the view of the Met's principal guest conductor, Valery Gergiev, even the more controversial aspects of Hvorostovsky's stagecraft can play in his favor. "Dmitri is a symbol of the much needed victorious spirit of the opera," he said. "The audience always needs to have some artists to feel madly happy or madly upset about, otherwise opera can become a bore." And there are performances in which Hvorostovsky's acting skills are exemplary. In Chicago last winter, pacing the stage with a seething, leonine rage as he sang the "Eri tu" aria in Verdi's "Ballo," he managed to convey Renato's tormented emotions—jealousy, sorrow, the fury of love and friendship simultaneously betrayed—without ever losing the limpidity, sheen, and richness of his voice.

Like Olga Borodina and a number of other Russian singers of his generation, Hvorostovsky has tried to revive pre-revolutionary Russia's celebrated tradition of bel canto—an Italian style of vocal composition, pioneered in the early nineteenth century by Vincenzo Bellini, Gioachino Rossini, and Gaetano Donizetti, which calls on opera singers to use arias as showcases for their virtuosity and flexibility, and to execute difficult trills and other ornamentation with agility and fluid ease. But during the Stalinist era bel canto was considered dangerously "cosmopolitan"; performers were commanded to shout their music in order to be understood by the masses, and to emphasize text and story at the expense of melody. Even an extraordinary teacher like Yoffel, who was a product of the Soviet system, was unable to teach Hvorostovsky the fine points of bel canto. So, while he was still attending conservatory in the isolated town of Krasnoyarsk, Hvorostovsky learned the technique on his own by assembling a vast collection of recordings, which he bought from "eccentric old gents in my town, opera fans who lived in one-room flats so filled with LPs that there was no room to sit or stand." He studied great Italian and Russian singers of an earlier time: Mattia Battistini; Giuseppe de Luca; the mid-century Armenian baritone Pavel Lisitsyan, one of the few performers who managed to remain a star throughout the Stalinist era while singing in the bel-canto style; and his "idol," Ettore Bastianini, a great singer of the nineteen-fifties and sixties whose accomplishments may have incited Hvorostovsky's own ambition to become the leading Verdi baritone of his generation.

Hvorostovsky graduated from the Krasnoyarsk conservatory in 1986, a year after Mikhail Gorbachev came to power. The reforms brought by perestroika enabled Soviet musicians to travel with far greater freedom. Because of his "very exceptional gifts," as he puts it, by the age of twenty-four Hvorostovsky had won the Soviet Union's most important singing competitions, and had also become one of the youngest singers to be named an Esteemed State Artist. In 1988, at the age of twenty-six, he decided to enter one of Europe's most prestigious musical competitions, the Concours International de Chant, in Toulouse, France.

It was Hvorostovsky's first trip outside the Soviet Union, and one of his first forays beyond his Siberian province. He was chaperoned by two female K.G.B. agents, inevitable company for a Soviet singer who ventured abroad. All performers had to give the government half of whatever prize money they earned. Hvorostovsky recalls that when he learned that he had come in first, and went up to the stage to collect his prize—a beautiful vase and an envelope full of cash—one of the K.G.B. agents shouted from the wings, "Hey, Hvorostovsky, hand over your money!" She walked onto the stage, counted out half of the cash, and put it in her



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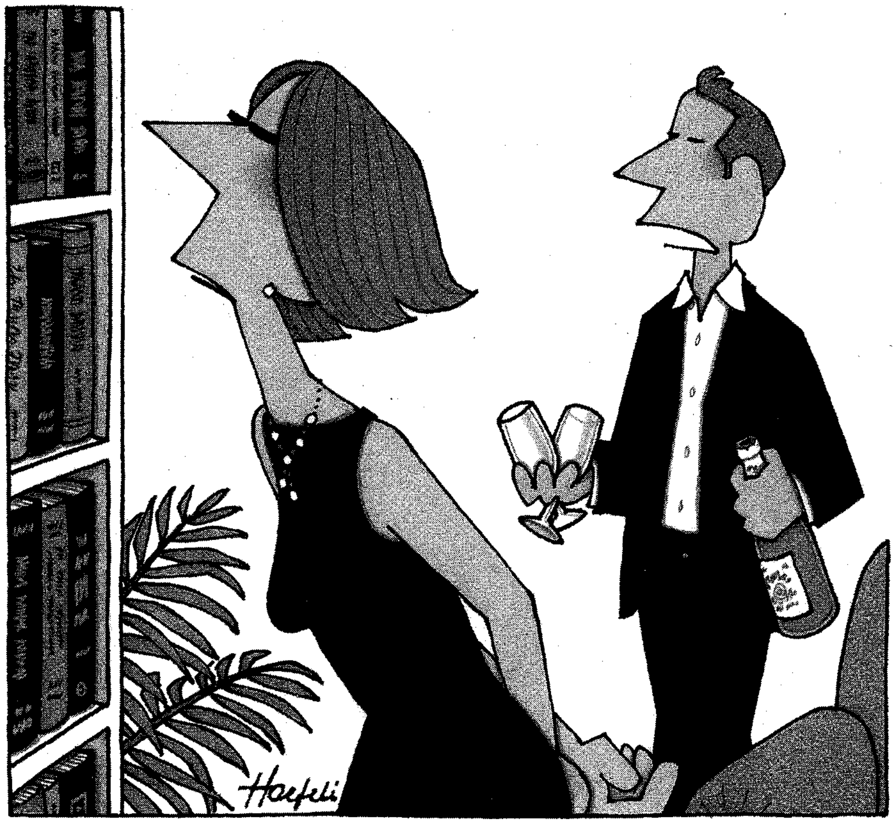

"I've had those books for years. They represent the person I once aspired to be."

• •

pocket. Hvorostovsky, who related the episode during our first meeting, in Chicago, now finds it amusing. "I kept the vase for myself," he said with a boyish, unguarded laugh. But it's easy to see why, after winning his next international event, he was happy to leave Russia.

The Cardiff Singer of the World competition, held every two years in the capital of Wales and televised throughout the British Isles by the BBC, is to music enthusiasts what Wimbledon is to tennis fans. With the encouragement of the great Russian mezzo-soprano Irina Arkhipova, who had become a keen supporter, Hvorostovsky entered the contest in 1989, a year after winning at Toulouse. (He had to borrow the money to buy a tuxedo from one of the K.G.B. agents accompanying him, and for much of the contest he worried about how he would repay the loan if he failed to win.) A member of that year's jury, the American impresario Matthew Epstein, who is now the artistic director of the Lyric Opera of Chicago, relates that he had heard about "a very interesting Russian baritone" and glimpsed Hvorostovsky in the hotel lobby, "a rather dishevelled guy in jeans and a scruffy-looking leather jacket and scruffy gray hair whose name we could hardly pronounce." At a preliminary round, Epstein sat at the jurors' table, next to the Swedish soprano Elisabeth Söderström. As Hvorostovsky began to sing the aria "Ombra mai fù," from Handel's "Xerxes," Epstein noticed that Söderström was making continuous lines of exclamation points on her score sheet. By the time he had finished the aria, exclamation points filled her sheet from top to bottom.

Hvorostovsky made it to the finals, where he competed against the Welsh bass-baritone Bryn Terfel, who was twenty-three at the time. The event, which is recorded on a recently released DVD celebrating twenty years of the Singer of the World competition, has gone down in Cardiff history as "the battle of the baritones." Hvorostovsky won by a narrow margin, singing, among other passages, Prince Yeletsky's aria from Tchaikovsky's "Queen of Spades" and Rodrigo's death scene from Verdi's "Don Carlos." According to Epstein, one of the many strengths of Hvorostovsky's performance was his phenomenal breath control—he sang the four last stanzas of Rodrigo's death scene in a single breath, a rare feat, after which he "saw stars" and almost passed out from oxygen deprivation.

Terfel and Hvorostovsky have grown to know each other well since Cardiff. "Finally we meet again! Too much time!" Terfel exclaims as he warmly greets Hvorostovsky on film footage of a 1995 reunion. "You've lost some weight!" Hvorostovsky says. "You can speak English!" Terfel replies. That same year, the two singers co-starred in a Salzburg production of "Le Nozze di Figaro."

At Cardiff, Hvorostovsky, who had made only one or two appearances in Moscow and St. Petersburg, became an international celebrity. Film footage of the Cardiff competition shows a roughhewn youth with longish, graying dark-brown hair and a rather arrogant air who dresses in tight suits and seldom smiles. Judy Drucker, the president of the Concert Association of Florida, who signed him up to perform after seeing the Cardiff videotape, "because his voice was so uniquely gorgeous it made me cry," remembers him as "a lovable but temperamental young man who was a heavy smoker, didn't speak a word of anything but Russian, and drank a lot of vodka." His relationships with producers and directors then left something to be desired. Heated quarrels with the stage director of a "Eugene Onegin" production at Paris's Théâtre du Châtelet a decade ago, for instance, tainted his reputation in France for years afterward.

Hvorostovsky is the first to admit that he was "far too arrogant and categorical" in the early years, and that his drinking caused "most if not all major mistakes in my life." He added, with characteristic candor, "I could easily put away two bottles of vodka after a performance. I was a noisy, troublesome drunk." He told me of an instance in the early nineteen-nineties when, after singing at the Fenice in Venice, he

GULLS

Naked, hairy, trembling, I dove into the green,
where I saw a bulky form that was Mother,
in her pink swimsuit, pushing out of water,
so I kicked deeper, beyond a sugar boat
and Blake's Ulro and Beulah; beyond grief, fate;
fingers, toes and skin; beyond speech,
plagues of the blood and flowers thrown on a coffin;
beyond Eros and the disease of incompleteness;
and as I swam I saw myself against the sky
and against the light, a tiny human knot with eyes,
my numb hands and repeated motion, like the gulls aloft,
touching the transparent structure of the world,
and in that icy, green, silvery frothing,
I was straightening all that I had made crooked.

—*Henri Cole*

got into a violent 4 A.M. brawl in a bar, losing some teeth and once more breaking his nose. He stopped smoking four years ago, and gave up drinking on New Year's Day, 2001. He now unwinds after performances by taking long, hot baths, watching "stupid television," and rereading Russian authors such as Gogol and Dostoyevsky. "I've learned a lot of patience since then," he said. "I've learned to be tactful and to compromise."

What may have rescued Hvorostovsky from his youthful excesses was a penchant for severe, almost punitive self-criticism. "My professional goals are so high and so unquestionably extreme," he told me. "I'm miserable when I'm not at a certain level, and this unhappiness can become really desperate." His London-based manager, Mark Hildrew, said, "Dmitri's the most perfectionist of singers. Many singers are smugly happy with a mediocre performance, but Dmitri's rarely happy with any performance, and that's one of the reasons he's gone so far in the past years."

Indeed, in the early nineteen-nineties Hvorostovsky had to move to London in order to meet the demands of an increasingly peripatetic opera and recital schedule. Between 1993 and 1996, he made his American stage début with "La Traviata" in Chicago and sang in six other operas in venues as varied as Salzburg and Buenos Aires, adding to his repertory the role of Valentin in "Faust" and the title rôle in "Don Giovanni."

Compared with tenors, baritones have a raw deal: they seldom get the girl, and they're often killed off in Act II. With the exception of "Don Giovanni," "Eugene Onegin," and a handful of other operas, baritone roles are typically the second most important—fathers (Germont in "Traviata"), brothers (Valentin in "Faust"), best friends (Renato in "Un Ballo in Maschera" and Rodrigo in "Don Carlos"), or sensational villains (Iago in "Otello," Francesco in "I Masnadieri"). Although they have some of opera's most show-stopping arias (Germont's "Di provenza il mar," Valentin's "Avant de quitter ces lieux"), they do not become household names as readily as tenors do. A musician like Hvorostovsky, whose forte is to give psychologically nuanced performances, is bound to feel the limitations of the baritone repertory. "There's often little there to create a complex characterization," he told me recently. "The baritone spectrum also used to be frustrating in its narrowness. But since I've started to sing the biggest roles, I've made up in depth what the repertory lacks in width. I've challenged myself to search for new and different ways to interpret each new role."

Hvorostovsky is fortunate that he excels at recitals, which take up half his singing time. They can be less taxing on

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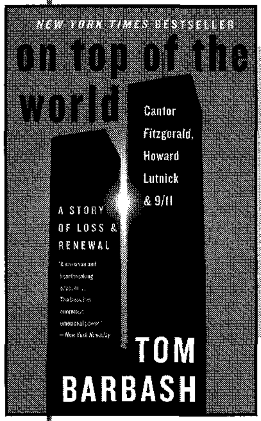
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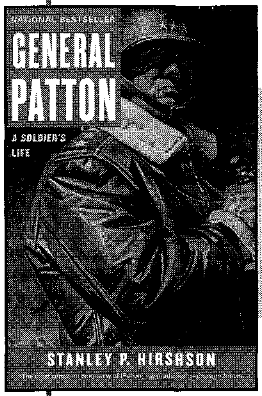
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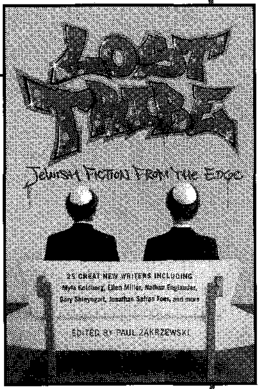
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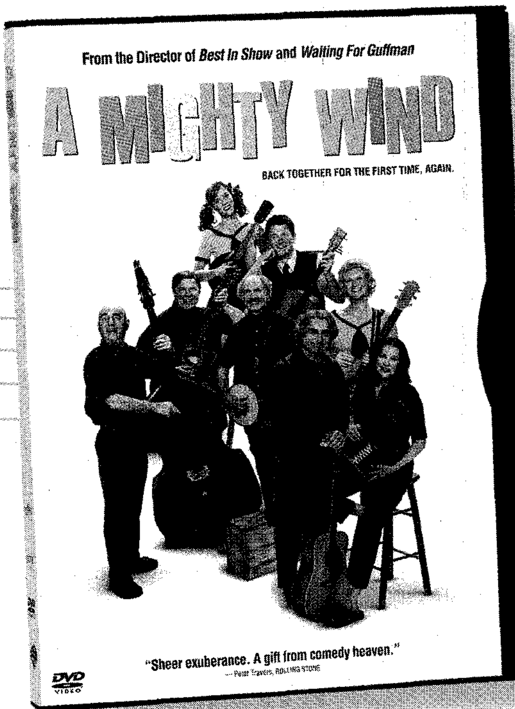
the voice than opera, and they seem to satisfy his considerable musical ego. As he puts it, "In the recital, you are the only king." Soon after Cardiff, Hvorostovsky began to give some thirty concerts a year in addition to his opera roles. In the past six months alone, he has sung thirteen recitals and concerts, while performing "Ballo" in Chicago, "Nozze" in Paris, and "Pagliacci" in London, in which he co-starred with Plácido Domingo. I once asked him if he ever feels homesick for Russia, where he is so well known that he is mobbed in shopping malls. He sings in Russia often enough not to miss it, he said, and whatever emotional ties he had to Siberia vanished a few years ago, when his beloved grandmother died. (He had pleaded with her to live with him in London, but she was too frail to leave Krasnoyarsk.) He still visits his parents whenever he sings in Russia, and no matter where he is he telephones them every day. Moreover, although he treasures his compatriots' passion for music, he finds their intensity exhausting. "Oy, they're the one audience I dread," he said. "They're too demanding, an energy-sucking audience, like vampires. Each time, it is like delivering a report to them on the state of my soul. I suffer there very, very much. It is like Golgotha—yet I can't live without them."

Hvorostovsky has recently acquired a British passport to make travelling easier, and he has no patriotic qualms about it. Today's capitalist Russia strikes him as vastly different from the regimented Soviet culture in which his talent was nurtured. There are few aspects of contemporary Russia he hates more than "the vulgar new Russians, the kind you see covered with gold chains, with their Cadillacs and their women in furs, speaking on cell phones in crowded elevators," he said. "With such people I have a great feeling of embarrassment—I pretend I'm not Russian." Hvorostovsky remains very much marked by the frugality and the Socialist principles that characterized the best of the Russian ethos during the Soviet era. "I have an idealistic nostalgia for the country in which I had my first struggles and triumphs," he said. "I might still feel more at home in that bread factory near Krasnoyarsk than in the Moscow of 2003."

"I'm doing a lot for Russian culture," Hvorostovsky said to me in June, as we sat over tea in another temporary flat—also anonymous and beige—during the run of his "Nozze" in Paris. "Perhaps it's a compensation for not feeling nostalgic for the homeland, for not feeling any patriotism." His heart may be set on Verdi, but it's through his Russian roles at the Met—Prince Yeletsky in "The Queen of Spades," and Prince Andrei in "War and Peace"—that Hvorostovsky scored his greatest operatic triumphs in New York. "Dmitri is definitely raised on Russian culture, on Russian vitamins," Gergiev, who conducted both productions, says. "It's like a Brazilian football player who now plays on a Milano club; he doesn't become Italian, but he keeps his Brazilian tradition while he's playing." Through his recitals and his scores of recordings, Hvorostovsky has also presented an abundance of Russian music that is little known in the West: arias from seldom performed operas such as Rachmaninoff's "Aleko," Anton Rubinstein's "The Demon," and Rimsky-Korsakov's "The Tsar's Bride," "Sadko," and "Kashchei the Immortal"; traditional liturgical chants; the melancholy songs of his beloved friend Georgy Sviridov, a composer whose work was suppressed until the late nineteen-seventies because he was not a member of the Communist Party; and his two most recent "crossover" disks, Russian romances and songs popular during the Second World War.

The last time Hvorostovsky and I met, over a meal in London—it was just before he began rehearsing "Pagliacci"—we discussed his future roles. He ordered lamb and Coke with lemon, and told me that the only talismanic ritual he engages in on the days he performs is to consume, at lunchtime, "a lot of raw meat," by which he means medium-rare beef or lamb. ("The energy builds up around 6 to 7 P.M., together with the adrenaline, and from then on it's *grrrrrr*. . . .") He was not yet certain how he would play Germont when he sings "Traviata" with Renée Fleming at the Met. "It will depend on what tack Renée takes," he said. "But, however I characterize Germont, I could never discount the sexual attraction he feels for Violetta." He also looks forward to bringing "Onegin" to Japan later this fall, and to singing Ravel and Mahler at Carnegie Hall next spring with the Met Orchestra and James Levine. Hvorostovsky is booked into 2008, and in the coming seasons he will continue to sing his abundant Russian repertory and to fully explore, in some of the world's grandest opera houses, the strenuous Verdi roles he has aspired to ever since his days at conservatory: "Simon Boccanegra," "Rigoletto," Count di Luna in "Il Trovatore," and, of course, Iago.

"I'm in a very cruel moment in my career," Hvorostovsky had said a few days earlier. "At the stage I'm at today, you can't show any weaknesses. You can't afford to get sick and drop out for a month. Well, there may come a time when I've reached more ease, when I'll be singing in stadiums." He thought a bit, and added, "But no, no, there will always be something to improve! I shall always remain painfully dissatisfied with myself." ♦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A SURVEY OF THE LITERATURE

BY GEORGE SAUNDERS

The Patriotic Studies discipline may properly be said to have begun with the work of Jennison et al., which first established the existence of the so-called "fluid-nations," entities functionally identical to the more traditional geographically based nations ("geo-nations"), save for their lack of what the authors termed "spatial/geographic contiguity." Citizenship in a fluid-nation was seen to be contingent not upon residence in some shared physical space (i.e., within "borders") but, rather, upon commonly held "values, loyalties, and/or habitual patterns of behavior" seen to exist across geonational borders.

For approximately the first five years of its existence, the Patriotic Studies discipline proceeded under the assumption that these fluid-nations were benign entities, whose existence threatened neither the stability nor the integrity of the traditional geo-nation. A classic study of this period was conducted by Emmons, Denny, and Smith, concerning the fluid-nation Men Who Fish. Using statistical methods of retro-attribution, the authors were able to show that, in a time of national crisis (the Battle of the Bulge, Europe, 1944), American citizens who were also citizens of Men Who Fish performed their duties every bit as efficiently (+/- 5 Assessment Units) as did members of the control group, even when that duty involved inflicting "harm" to "serious harm" on fellow-citizens of Men Who Fish who were allied at that time with the opposing geo-nation (i.e., Germany). During this battle, as many as seventy-five hundred (and no fewer than five thousand) German soldiers who were also citizens of Men Who Fish were killed or wounded by American soldiers who were citizens of Men Who Fish, leading the authors to conclude that citizens of Men Who Fish were not "expected, in a time of national crisis, to respond significantly less patriotically than a control group of men of similar age, class, etc., who are not citizens of Men Who Fish."

Significant and populous fluid-nations examined during this so-called "Exoneration Studies" period included Men with Especially Large Penises; People Who Say They Hate Television but Admit to Watching It Now and Then, Just to Relax; Women Who When Drunk Berate the Sport of Boxing; and Elderly Persons Whose First Thought Upon Hearing of a Death Is Relief That They Are Still Alive, Followed by Guilt for Having Had That First Feeling.

A watershed moment in the history of the discipline occurred with the groundbreaking work of Randall, Cleary, et al., which demonstrated for the first time that individuals were capable of holding multiple fluid-nation citizenships. Using the newly developed Anders-Reese Distance-Observation Method, the authors were able to provide specific examples of this phenomenon. A Nebraska man was seen to hold citizenship in Men Who Sit Up Late at Night Staring with Love at Their Sleeping Children and also in Farmers Who Mumble Soundless Prayers While Working in Their Fields. In Cincinnati, Ohio, twin sisters were found to belong to Five-Times-a-Week Churchgoers as well as to Clandestine Examiners of One's Own Hardened Nasal Secretions. An entire family in Abilene, Texas, was seen to belong to Secretly Always Believe They Are the Ugliest in the Room, with individual members of this family also holding secondary citizenships in fluid-nations as diverse as Listens to Headphones in Bed; Stands Examining Her Breasts in Her Closet; Brags Endlessly While Actually Full of Doubt; Makes Excellent Strudel; and Believes Fervently in the Risen Christ.

At the time, awareness of this work among the general public was still low. This would change dramatically, however, with the publication, by Beatts, Daniels, and Ahkerbaj, of their comprehensive study of the fluid-nation Individuals Reluctant to Kill for an Abstraction.

In this study, a hundred and fifty-five citizens of the target fluid-nation were assessed per the Hanley-Briscombe National-Allegiance Criterion, a statistical model developed to embody the Dooley-Sminks-Ang Patriot Descriptor Statement, which defined a patriot as "an individual who, once the leadership of his country has declared that action is necessary, responds quickly, efficiently, and without wasteful unnecessary questioning of the declared national goal."

Results indicated that citizens of Individuals Reluctant to Kill for an Abstraction scored, on average, thirty-nine points lower on the National-Allegiance Criterion than did members of the control group and exhibited nonpatriotic attitudes or tendencies twenty-nine per cent more often. Shown photographs of citizens of an opposing geo-nation and asked,"What sort of person do you believe this person to be?," citizens of Individuals Reluctant to Kill for an Abstraction were sixty-four per cent more likely to choose the response "Don't know, would have to meet them first." Given the opportunity to poke with a rubber baton a citizen of a geo-nation traditionally opposed to their geo-nation (an individual who was at that time taunting them with a slogan from a list of Provocative Slogans), citizens of Individuals Reluctant to Kill for an Abstraction were found to be seventy-one per cent less likely to poke than members of the control group.

The authors' conclusion ("Within this particular fluid-nation, loyalty to the fluid-nation may at times surpass loyalty to the parent geo-nation"), along with the respondents' professed willingness to subjugate important geo-national priorities, and even accept increased national-security risks, in order to avoid violating the Cohering Principle of their fluid-nation (i.e., not killing for an abstraction), led to the creation of a new category of fluid-nation, the "Malignant" fluid-nation.

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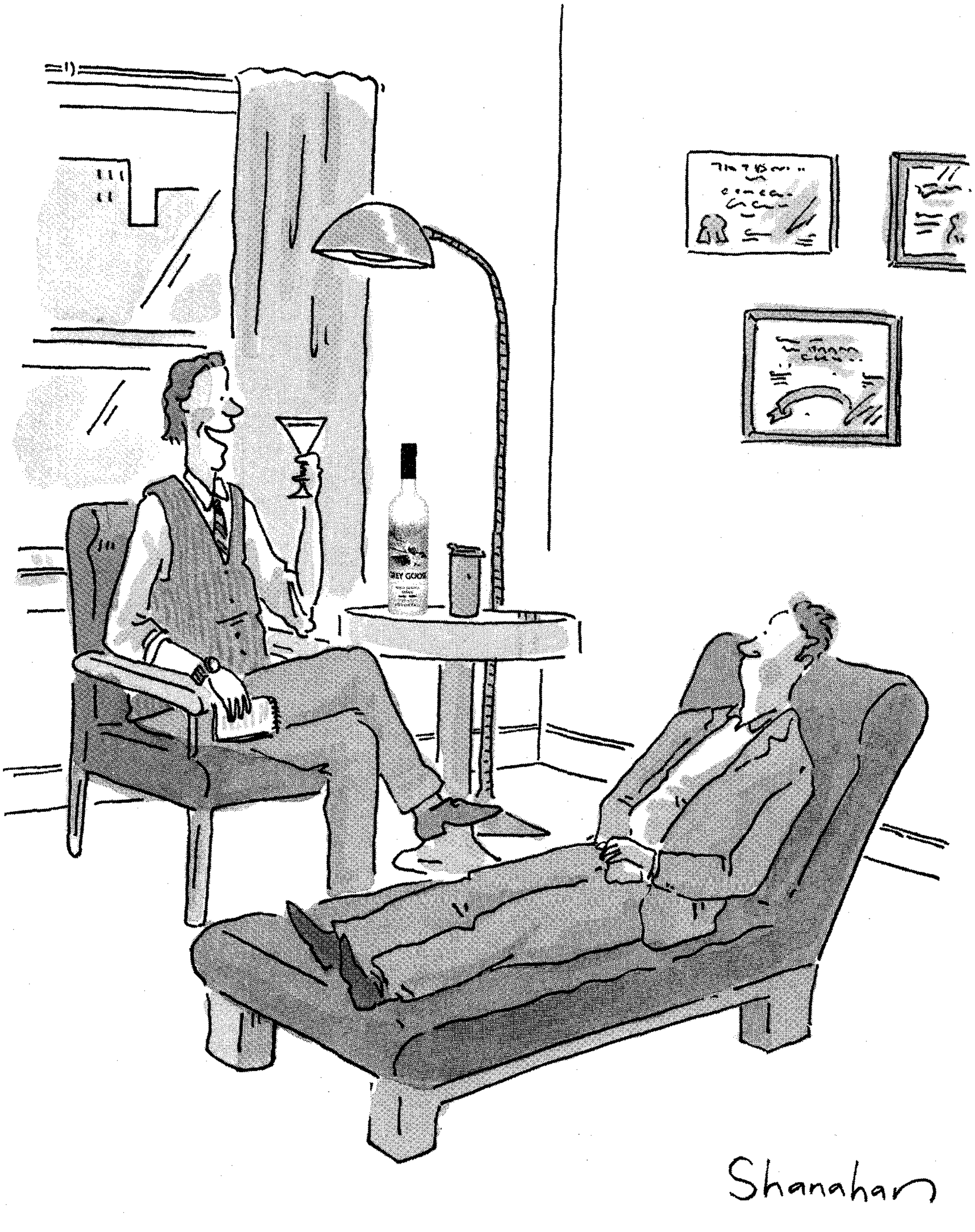
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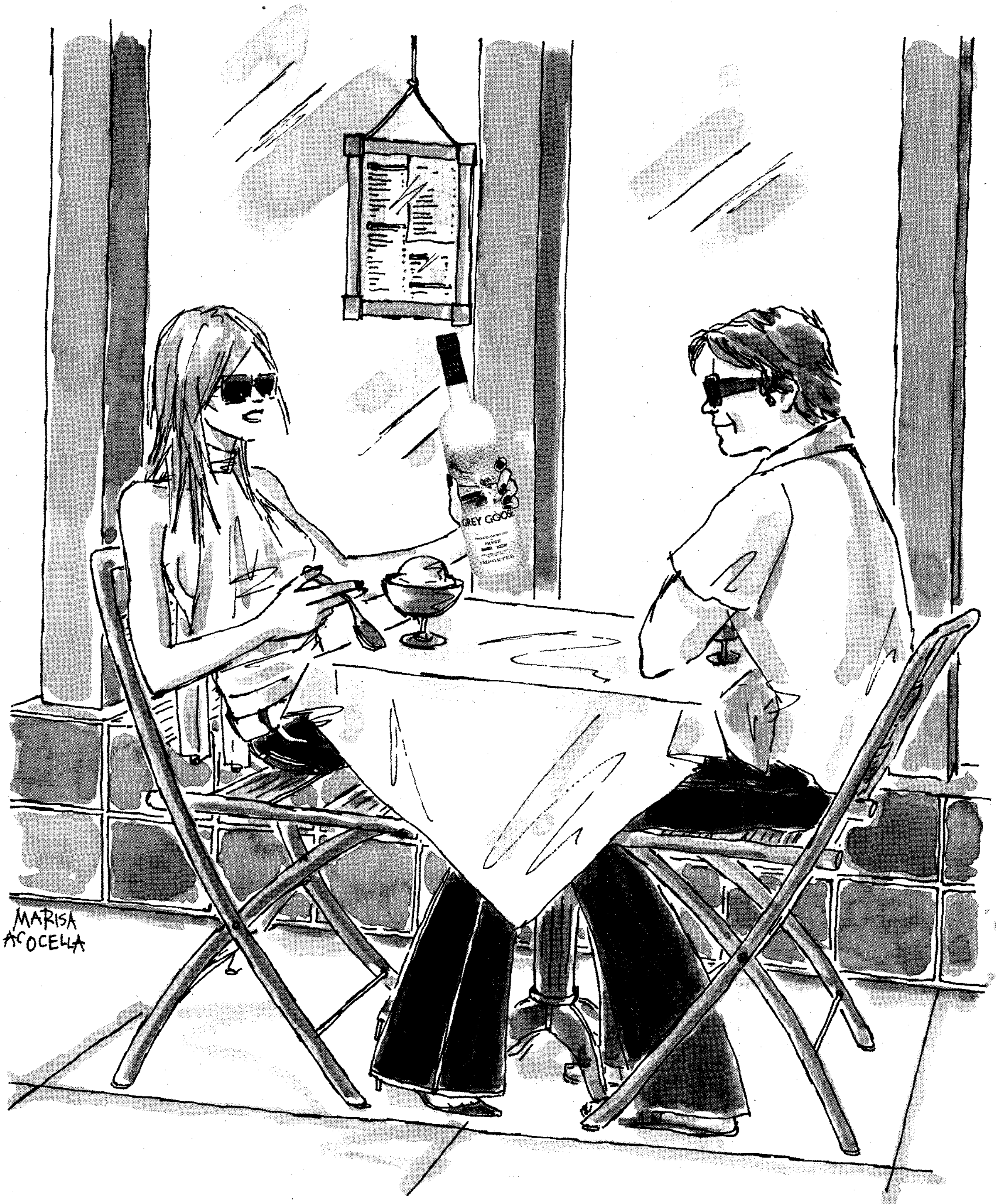
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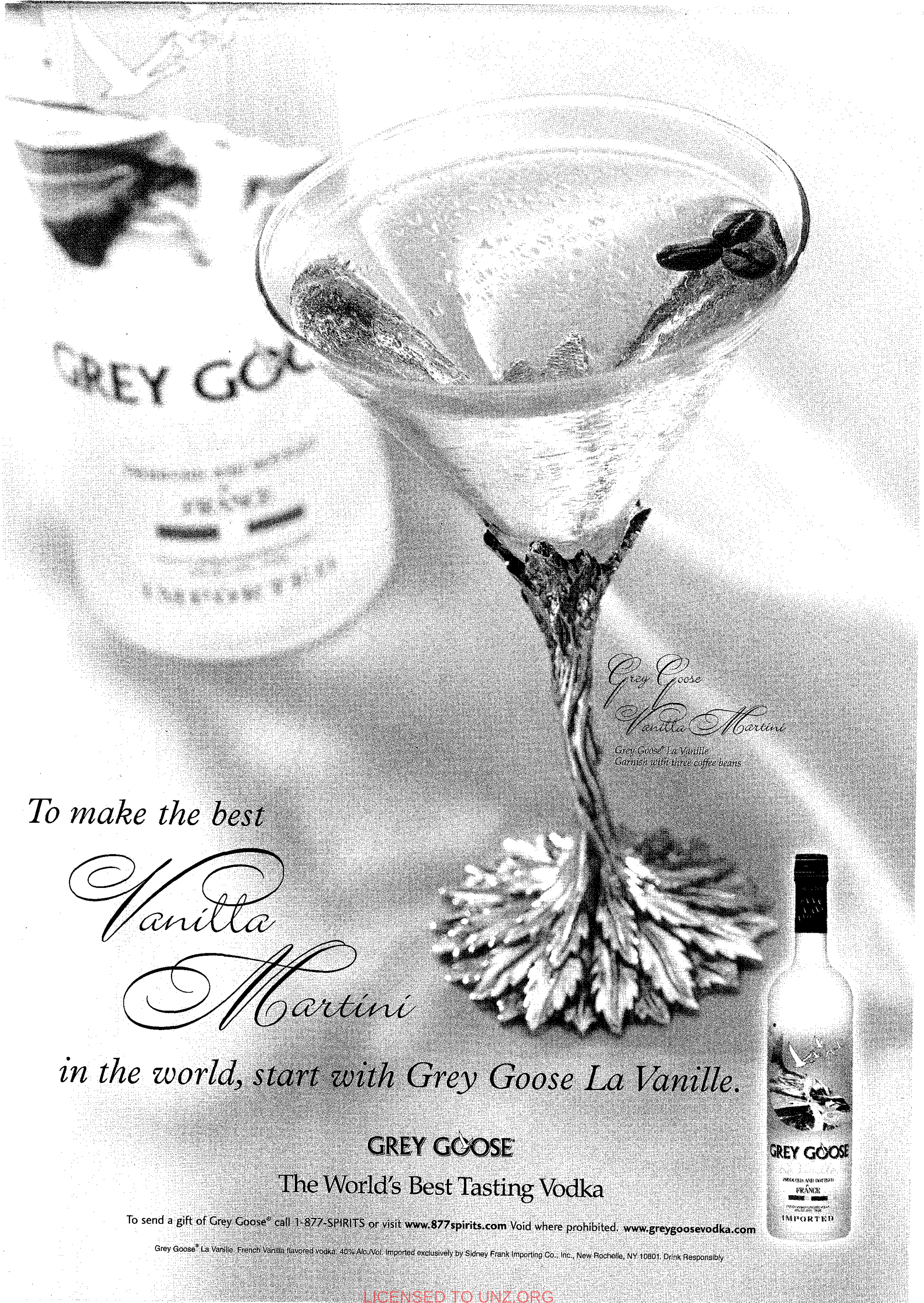
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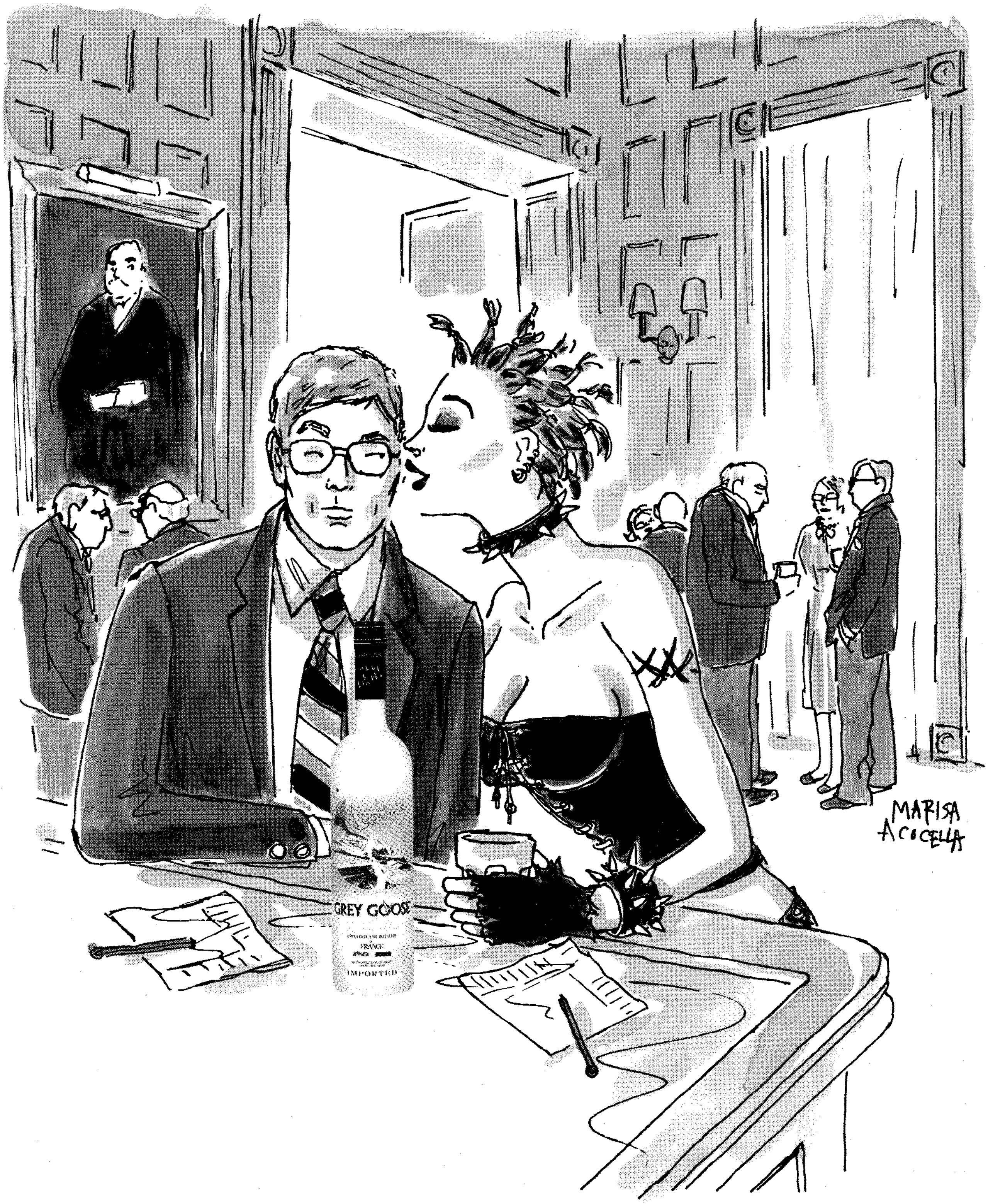
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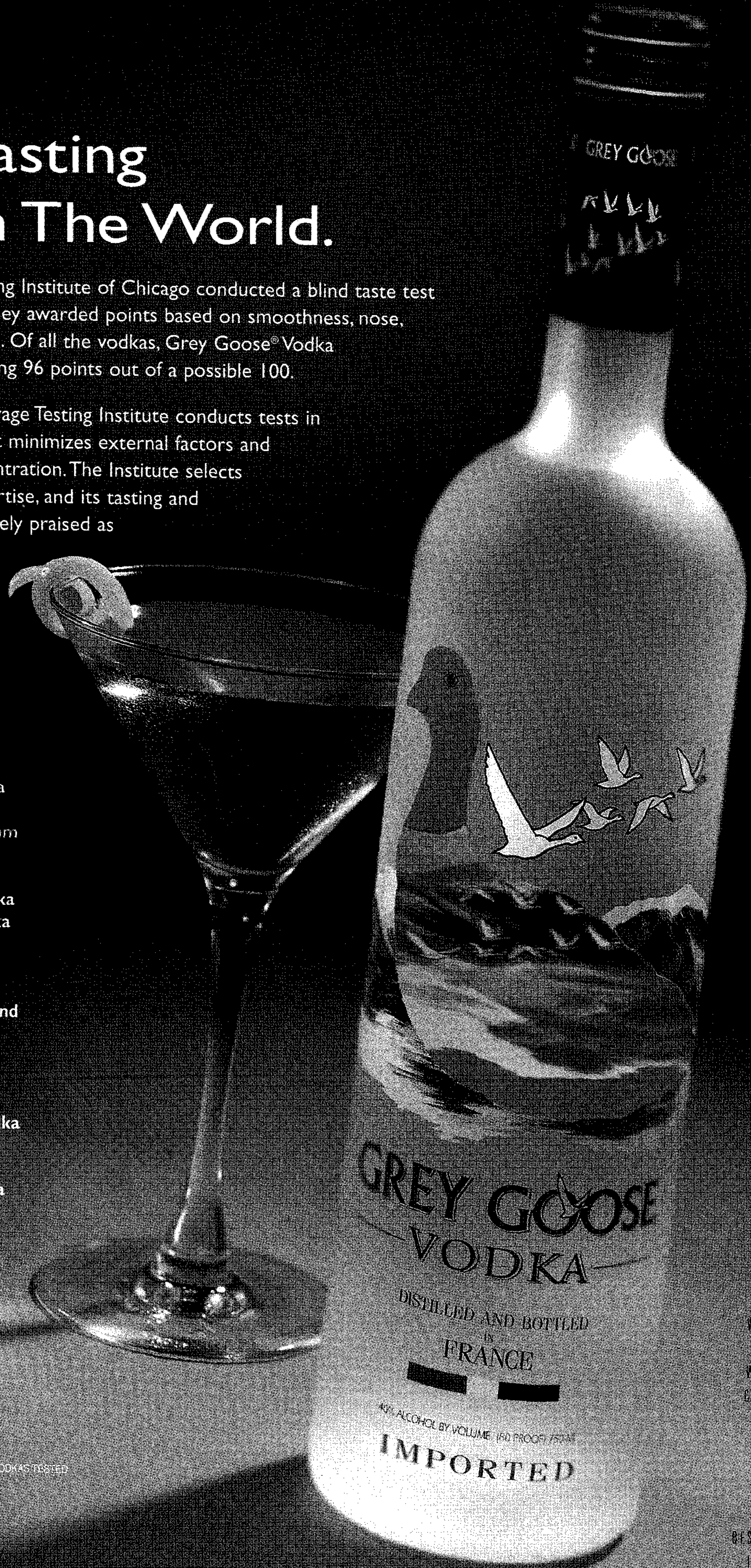
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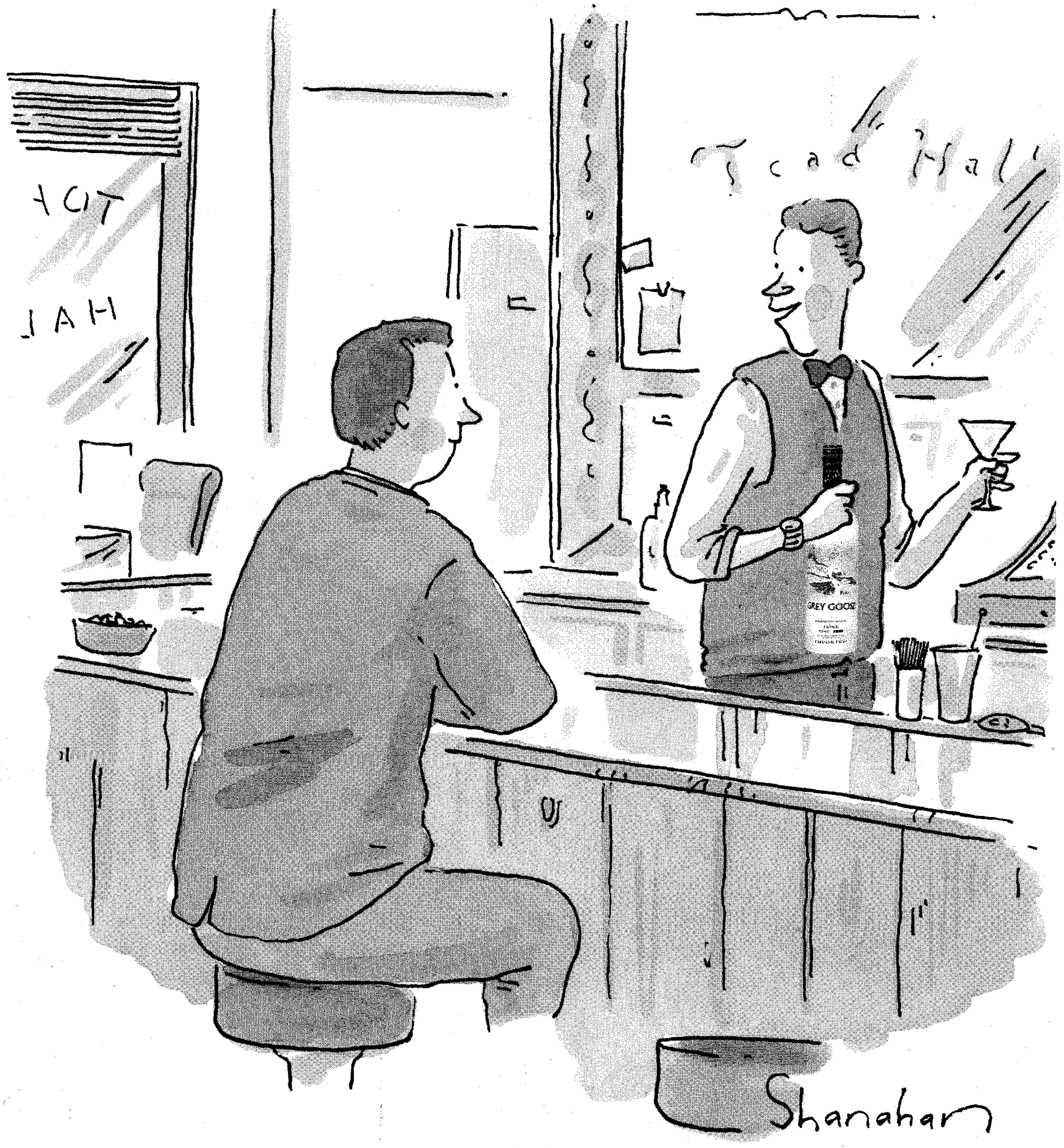
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Elliott, Danker, et al., who made the important (and at the time startling) discovery that multiple fluid-nation citizenship *did not occur in random distributions.* That is, given a known fluid-nation citizenship, it was theoretically possible to predict an individual's future citizenship in other fluid-nations, using complex computer-modelling schemes. The authors found, for example, that citizens of Overinvolved Mothers tended to become, later in life, citizens of either Overinvolved Grandmothers or (perhaps paradoxically) Completely Uninterested Grandmothers, with high rates of occurrence observed also in Women Who Collect Bird Statuary and Elderly Women Who Purposely Affect a "Quaint Old Lady" Voice.

The implications of these data vis-à-vis the so-called Malignant fluid-nations were clear. Work immediately began within the discipline to identify and develop new technologies for the purpose of identifying those fluid-nations most likely to produce future citizens of Malignant fluid-nations. The most sophisticated and user-friendly of these tools proved to be the Rowley Query Grid, which successfully predicted the probability that citizens of Tends to Hold Him/Herself Aloof from the Group (previously thought to be innocuous) would, in time, evolve into citizens of Individuals Reluctant to Kill for an Abstraction. Subsequently, dozens of these "Nascent-Malignant" fluid-nations were identified, including Bilingual Environmentalists, Crusty Ranchers, Angry Widowers, and Recent Immigrants with an Excessive Interest in the Arts.

Needless to say, these findings resulted in dramatic improvements in both the National Security Index and the Unforeseen-Violence Probability Statistic.

Entire research departments have now embarked on the herculean task of identifying all extant fluid-nations, with particular emphasis, of course, on links to known Malignant fluid-nations. The innovative work of Ralph Frank, in which fifty individuals waiting for a bus in Portland, Oregon, were, briefly and with their full consent, taken into custody and administered the standard Fluid-Nation Identifier Questionnaire, indicated the worrisome ubiquity of these fluid-nations. At least ninety-seven separate fluid-nations were detected within this random gathering of Americans, including, but not limited to: Now Heavy Former Ballerinas; Gum-Chompers; People Who Daydream Obsessively of Rescuing Someone Famous; Children of Mothers Who Were Constantly Bursting Into Tears; Men Who Can Name Entire Lineups of Ball Teams from Thirty Years Ago; Individuals in Doubt That Someone Will Ever Love Him/Her; and Individuals Who Once Worked, or Considered Working, as Clowns. A closer analysis of the fluid-nations identified indicated that *nearly fifty per cent of these* had been, would soon be, or very possibly could eventually be linked to Individuals Reluctant to Kill for an Abstraction, or to another Malignant fluid-nation.

It is thus no longer a question of whether a large number of Americans belong to fluid-nations; it is, rather, a question of how willing Americans are to freely confess these citizenships, and to then undergo the necessary mitigative measures so that the nation need have no doubt about their readiness to respond in an emergency.

This is not, of course, just an American issue; leaders of other geo-nations have now begun to recognize the potential gravity of this threat. Throughout the world, at any given moment, the justifiable aims of legitimate geo-nations are being threatened by reckless individuals who insist upon indulging their private, inscrutable agendas. The prospect of a world plagued by these fluid-nations—a world in which one's identification with one's parent geo-nation is constantly being undermined—is sobering indeed. This state of affairs would not only allow for but require a constant, round-the-clock reassessment of one's values and beliefs prior to action, a continual adjustment of one's loyalties and priorities based on an evaluation and reëvaluation of reality—a process that promises to be as inefficient as it is wearying.

The above summary has, of necessity, been brief. It will be left to future scholars, working in a time of relative calm, once the present national crisis has receded, to tell the full story, in all the rich detail it deserves. ♦

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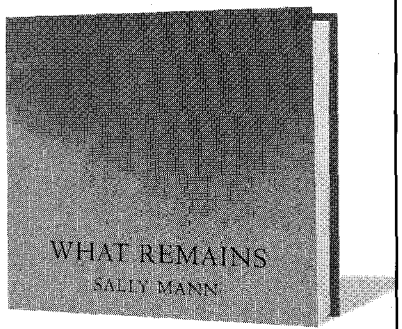

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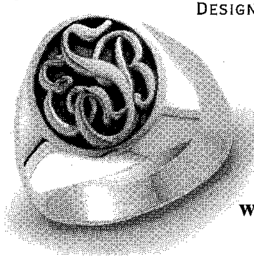

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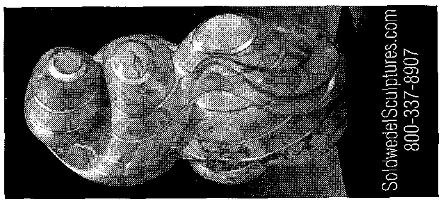
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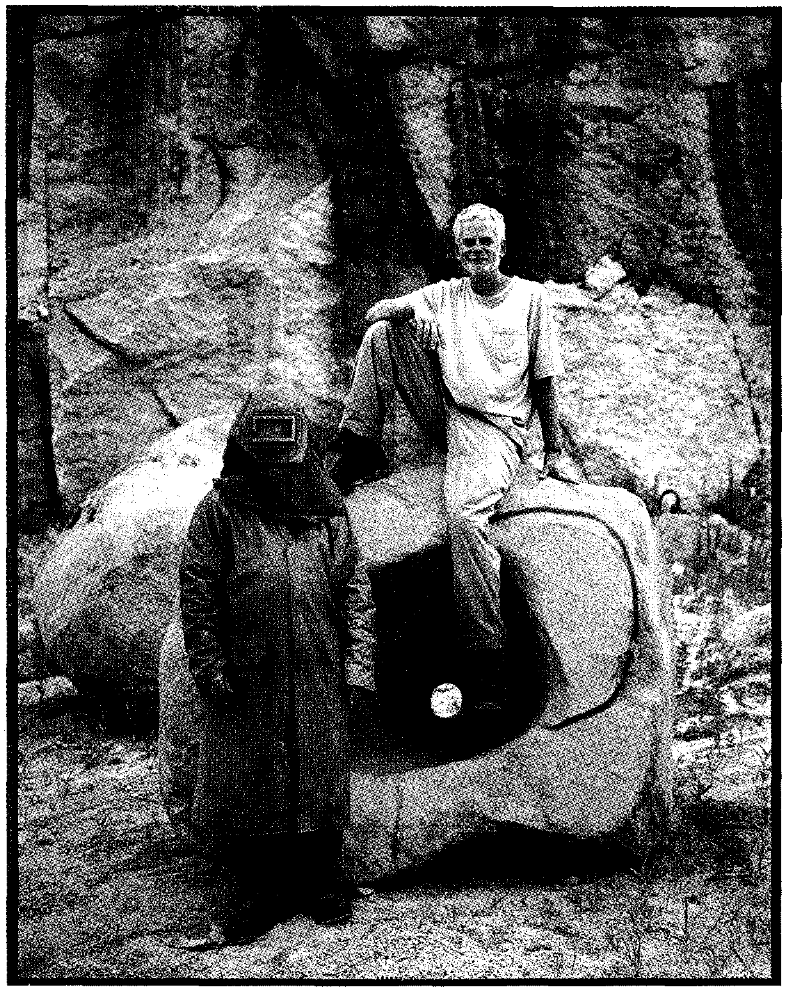

Andy Goldsworthy with Ed Monti (left). Photograph by Richard Avedon.

On a sultry morning in early August, the sculptor Andy Goldsworthy stood in a quarry in Stony Creek, Connecticut, watching the heart being burned out of a ten-ton granite boulder. Eighteen of these tawny-gray brutes, varying between three and fifteen tons, are to be scattered around a space measuring a hundred and twenty feet by thirty-five on the second-story roof terrace of the new extension of the Museum of Jewish Heritage, in Battery Park City. The hollowed rocks will then be filled with soil, and, on September 16th, Holocaust survivors will plant a dwarf chestnut-oak sapling in each one, creating a memorial Garden of Stones.

Ten feet away from Goldsworthy, the stonecutter, Ed Monti (who is the son of an Italian immigrant quarryman), stood on an upended milk crate, draped in a yellow safety coat, his head masked by a black welder's helmet, pointing a six-foot shoulder-mounted lance at the half-eaten core of the lichen-webbed rock. From the nozzle of the lance a propane-ignited mixture of kerosene and oxygen hit the stone at around four thousand degrees Fahrenheit, generating a jet-engine roar. Sprays of sparks erupted about Monti's cowled head as the granite slowly yielded to his gouging flame. It can take twenty-two hours of this relentless attack to turn the largest boulders into scooped eggs.

Amid the din, Goldsworthy, a wiry Englishman in his forties with a habitually frank and friendly expression, observed the burning intently. The rock surrenders to the fire, he said, because fire created it in the first place. But fire cleans as well as sculpts. Shooting flames at granite not only reënacts primordial geology but converts the incinerations of genocide into the flames of sanctification.

Monti, a short, stocky man in his seventies, with a creased, nut-brown face, was unconcerned with these grand meditations. After about half an hour of concentrated fire, he descended from the milk crate and emerged from the helmet, haloed by clouds of steam produced by the cooling spray he runs at the same time as the fire-lance. He is more at home fashioning birdbaths and big neoclassical fountains, one of which was standing behind Goldsworthy's boulders like a duchess stranded in low company. Monti, who drives to the quarry every day from Quincy, south of Boston, made no secret of the fact that the job is more perseverance than pleasure, since kerosene fumes got inside his mask and red-hot splinters of flying rock sometimes burned through his protective clothing. Goldsworthy, too, who has been often scarred, frozen, and lacerated while making his strenuously wrought pieces, showed off fresh burn marks acquired on the job. "Dangerous work—can get nasty," Monti said in his flat Massachusetts accent, with a rueful smile. Jacob Ehrenberg, Goldsworthy's imperturbable young project manager, has had to deal with operatic Monti specials: tantrums over pay; impromptu walkouts. But on this morning Monti went at it with a will, looking, with his helm and spear, decidedly archaic, like a warrior on an Attic vase.

During a break from the burning, Goldsworthy, Ehrenberg, and I peered into the opened belly of the rock. The interior was speckled gray, with shreds of stone flaking away from the walls or pulverized into a granular silica, like sand on a beach, some of the grains glassily fused. John Ruskin's feverishly beautiful passages on "Compact Crystallines," in "Modern Painters," came to mind, in which he describes the glitter of granite as looking "somewhat like that of a coarse piece of freshly broken loaf sugar."

The cavity is conical, a form that much preoccupies Goldsworthy, who often declares a debt to Brancusi. Monti was working from the opened base and down the narrowing funnel. Once hollowed, the rocks are inverted, so that the saplings can sit at the neck of the boulder, atop their bed of earth. The disproportion between the hefty stones and the tiny, six-inch plants may risk looking absurd, but it will at least preclude any possibility of the stones' resembling the oversized planters commonplace in corporate atriums. Instead, a mysterious hatching will be inaugurated: the sprig from the rock.

The growth process of the sprouting menhirs, standing between the Hudson and Ground Zero, will not, however, be risk-free. Tom Whitlow, a Cornell plant ecologist whom Goldsworthy consulted, warned that if the growing tree should press against its unyielding stone girdle it could crush the living cambium immediately beneath the bark. In that case, the root system would atrophy and die. But unlike many contemporary artists, fretful about their posterity, Goldsworthy incorporates the indeterminate outcomes of natural processes into most of his work. Sculptures created from found materials like ice and thorns, driftwood, and even bleached kangaroo bones all presuppose that artistic design will yield to the cycles of time and climate, whether over an hour or a decade.

Sometimes misread as a placid pastoralist, Goldsworthy is in fact a dramaturge of nature's temper, often fickle, often foul. A recent, very beautiful film of his work, "Rivers and Tides: Andy Goldsworthy Working with Time," must be one of the few documentaries in which an artist is seen enduring, repeatedly, the collapse of his own creation, as he attempts to build a cone of dark seashore stones. The idea, a dream of every seven-year-old sandcastle engineer, was that the cone should stand sentinel, almost submerged in the high tide, yet survive intact to reappear as the water receded. (After multiple failures, he finally pulls it off.) Similarly, Goldsworthy relishes the embattled growth of his dwarf chestnut oaks, contending with the jackhammer shaking of downtown construction, the judder of helicopter rotors on the riverbank, sudden gusts of estuarine winds, and the murky air of lower Manhattan. The plants' fight for survival against the odds is meant as an emblem of the Jewish experience they memorialize. "The trees I wanted couldn't be decorative," he says. "They needed to be tough little S.O.B.s."

On August 22nd, three weeks before the inauguration of the Garden of Stones, the last boulders were hoisted into their positions on the museum roof, and it was already apparent that Goldsworthy's sculpture would be one of the most powerful monuments in a city still struggling to find visual expressions for the tug between the perishable and the imperishable.

"Land art"—the genre in which Goldsworthy works—began in the nineteen-sixties, as an attack on the embalming of raw nature by the aesthetics of landscape. Of all the genres of painting, landscape, with its window view of the world, its dependence on the illusion of depth, was arguably the one furthest from two-dimensional abstraction. Even flattened out, its pastoral lyricism was at the opposite pole from the street-smart edginess that agitated New York Abstract Expressionism. But some sort of modernist encounter with nature was still possible. The founders of American land art—Robert Smithson, Nancy Holt, and Michael Heizer—aimed for an engagement with the outdoors that would break from the confinement of the rectangular frame; from freestanding sculpture that used a park or a landscape as an ornamental setting; and, above all, from the decorum of the gallery or the apartment wall. Instead of being a decorative placebo for urban angst, land art would, if anything, aggravate it, by frankly displaying what had become of the natural world in the age of industrial junk. The scenery—whether desert wilderness or the parking lots recorded in Smithson's "Monuments of Passaic"—would, photographically, at least, call the shots.

Land art was to be landscape's comeuppance. The place would own the beholder, not the other way around, since to experience Smithson's "Spiral Jetty," at the Great Salt Lake, or the earthworks that Heizer cut into the desert one had to travel a very long way from Madison Avenue. What was left for the dealers to display and sell was nothing more than the secondhand trace of the authentic work out there in the wilderness: a photographic or cartographic record. Galleries dutifully filled up with lists, journal pages, rambling manifestos on entropy, and studiously amateurish photographs. The unreproducibility of the original epiphany was precisely the point.

The response of British land artists to all these Big Sky–Bad Boy backhoe heroics was creative understatement laced with a smidgin of polite distaste. Trucking through the desert and shifting the dirt was fine for a country with millions of acres of unpopulated wilderness, but Britain was the opposite kind of place. Not an inch of its crowded landscape was unmarked by human occupation. So its land art needed to be practiced as though Wordsworth were still with us: it had to be respectful of ancient rights of way, reverently self-effacing. In 1967, Richard Long created "A Line Made by Walking"—a photograph of the darkened trail made by his tromping back and forth over the grass. The integrity of the piece assumed that Long's line would be temporary and that, by the time most viewers saw the record, the bruising inflicted on the landscape would have been naturally repaired. Instead of nature brushworked into art, British land art proposed a brush with nature, its materials discovered rather than appropriated. Although nature, however fleeting the visitation, cannot, of course, take its own likeness, and although Long's austere images were necessarily framed and staged, they rapidly acquired canonical status.

In the late nineteen-seventies, Andy Goldsworthy, then a student at Preston Polytechnic, in Lancaster, went to hear a "lecture" by Long that turned out to be a slide show accompanied only by country-and-Western music. Asked

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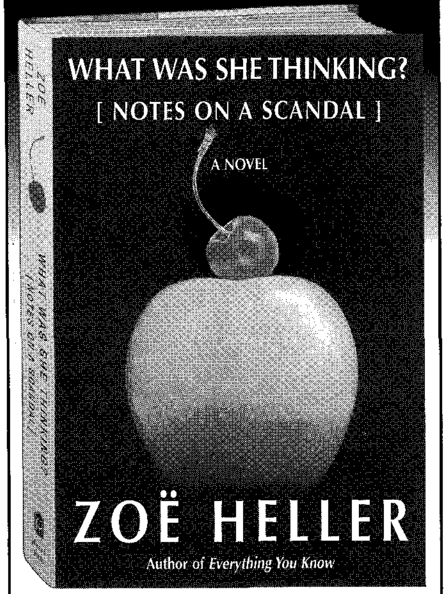
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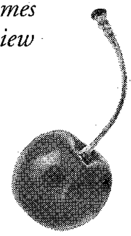
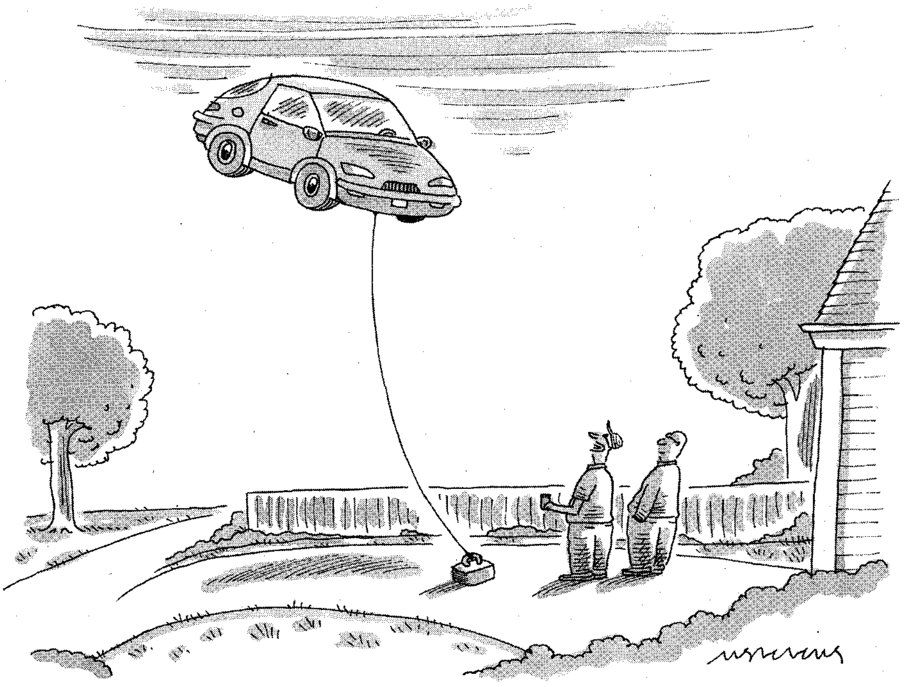


if he would comment on the images, Long, in keeping with his reputation as a monkish pilgrim traipsing the upland, declined. Despite—or possibly because of—the performance, Goldsworthy, who had worked as a farm laborer just outside Leeds since he was thirteen, responded to the appeal, mutely offered by the slides, of making art outside with found materials. Most promising young artists would have made a beeline for London. But Goldsworthy, upon escaping the claustrophobia of the drawing cubicle, headed for the sweeping shore of the Lancashire coast at Morecambe Bay, and there made his first constructions in stone.

Immediately, he encountered land art's Catch-22: the need for a record. The record might be photographic, or it could consist of allusions to the real thing—circles of slate laid on the floor, for example. But as soon as the stones entered the gallery space, not to mention the inventory of dealers and the collections of patrons, they lost the flinty integrity that came with their "on site" isolation. Even the Zen-Puritan Long understood that his gnomic trails—map coördinates, numeric and textual itineraries—were too arid to hold the viewer's interest, and he took to bringing into the gallery shorthand versions of his original experience. Whenever possible, the floor, rather than the wall—the conventional plane of display—was to be used, or, if the walls were covered, it was with exhibitions of thinly laid-on mud, not paint. The idea was to rough up museum manners by importing the raw fabric of outside work. Even so, when land art surrendered to the wine-and-cheese gallery opening, it had, by its purest lights, surrendered.

Goldsworthy, however, believes—as a matter of historical fact and his own individual taste—that the social and the natural are not mutually exclusive. Making a virtue of a dilemma, he co-opts gallery space as a collaborator in natural process: covering the floor with clay taken from a construction site on the grounds and letting it harden and split into craquelure, outside and inside joined in an unhappy marriage; bringing in giant snowballs, stained with the natural dirt or dye of their origins, and allowing the melt to make an image on large sheets of paper, a visual history of self-dissolution.

Alternatively, he makes the suburbs do unsuburban things, obliging them to remember the harder rural history over which they have been comfortably laid. A road-facing stone wall, built for a Westchester client, has embedded at its center a huge boulder that looks like an invader from glacial prehistory; another wall has a fallen tree trunk laid horizontally within the stones, guarantee-



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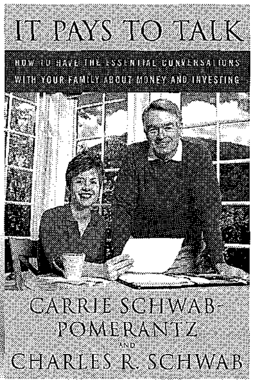
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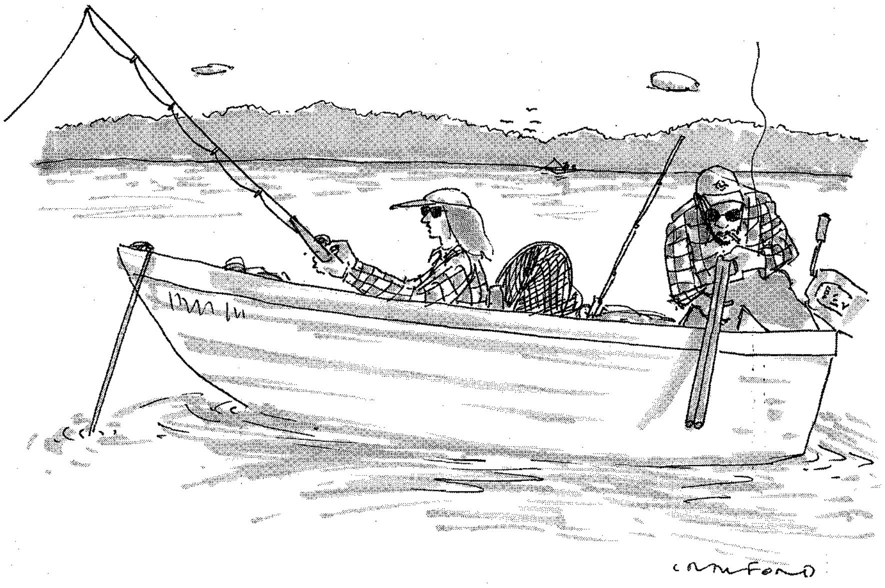


"Any nibbles yet, hon?"

• •

ing, at some point, the wall's collapse. Goldsworthy is drawn to social landscapes. Not for him the epic remoteness of Michael Heizer excavating a cut in the Nevada desert, or the solitary, imperially guilt-burdened peregrinations of Richard Long in the Andes or the Himalayas. Goldsworthy welcomes collaborations with wallers and shepherds (including neighbors in Dumfriesshire, in southern Scotland), pulling into his art the densely packed memories of human and animal occupation, limned through old hedges, cart tracks, and sheepfolds.

One of Goldsworthy's most spectacular and popular works is "The Storm King Wall," built in 1997-98 for the Storm King sculpture park, in the Hudson Valley. It was made possible by an encounter with the debris of an old drystone wall, overrun, like most such walls in the valley, with second-growth forest when farming was abandoned. In contrast to most of the contemporary sculptures at Storm King, which are simply set in the landscape, Goldsworthy's is of it. His snaking, 2,278-foot drystone line was built by wallers imported from the North of England, where curved walls are called "crinkle-crankle." It reverses expectations in that the stones appear to move, while the stands of maple, shagbark hickory, and oak through which it travels resist their encroachment. (With time, root systems and wall foundations will conduct a pushing and shoving match.) Emerging from the woods, the line descends giddily into a pond and seems to resurface before climbing the far bank and getting itself straightened out, American fashion, as it heads directly for the perimeter highway.

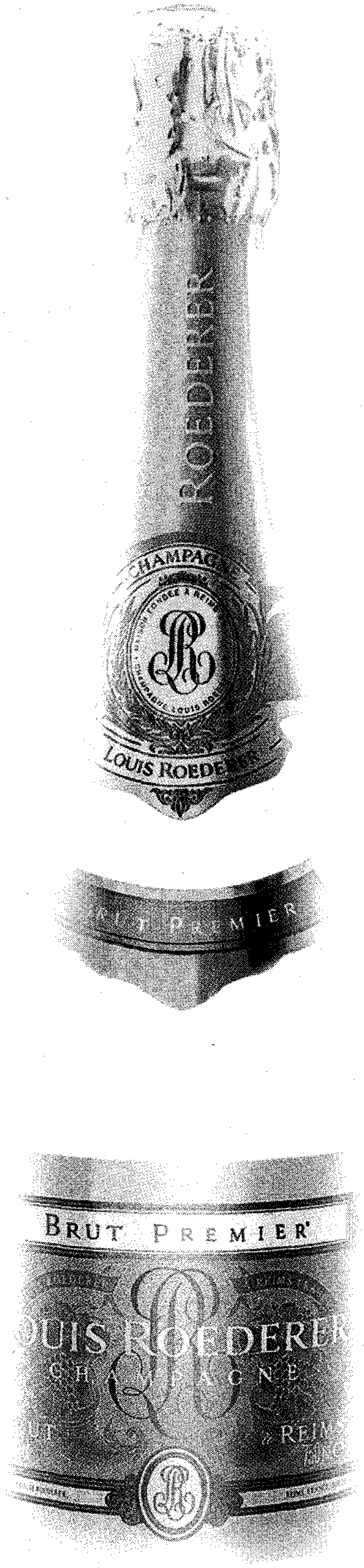
But there is "Wall," the book, as well as wall, the work: one in a series of large-format volumes, published by Abrams, packed with dazzling photographs documenting Goldsworthy's ephemeral works. There are pools dyed blood red with pigment rubbed from on-site iron-oxide rocks; translucent arches of ice destined to self-destruct in the winter sun; rocks smeared with peat to coal black; thrown clouds of sand or snow, photographed at the sprayed arc of their ascent; coronas of bracken stalks fastened with thorns and hung from trees; delicate strings of pale-green rush threaded about a mossy trunk. These high-color glossy images are the antithesis of the self-consciously primitive, grainy prints favored by the founders of land art, and they have been taken by Goldsworthy's critics to be evidence that he is, at heart, an ornamentalist, a glamorist of nature who has made the mistake, serious in a contemporary artist, of hunting beauty. "Fiddling around with nature" was one such verdict. While Goldsworthy concedes that the books may have contributed to misunderstanding, he does not apologize for working with color, using it to load his work with emblematic and poetic allusion. A drape of autumnal elm leaves about a rock documents, through the belying brilliance of its yellow, the doom of the diseased species of tree; a line of fleece laid atop a Dumfriesshire drystone wall invokes a sorry history, when entire rural populations were cleared to make way for sheep.

Goldsworthy's work has been widely exhibited and praised on three continents, but it has yet to be acquired by the Tate Collection, the pantheon of British modernism. The omission is predictable, for the work's peculiar virtues—its moral intensity; its Ruskinian devotion to work and craft; its scientific curiosity; its intelligent engagement with the long history of land use; its keen instinct for the baroque hyperbole of the natural world (all those mottlings and juttings and peelings and stainings)—are precisely what is least likely to recommend it to the contemporary canon. Yet it could be argued that Goldsworthy's work is at least as conceptually rich as Smithson's; his compressions of space and water as metaphysically suggestive as the sculpture of Anish Kapoor; his use of found materials as inflected with past use and future alteration as the wood pieces of his friend David Nash; and his meditations on decay, mortality, and generation as smart as Damien Hirst's.

But the connoisseurs of decomposition are overwhelmingly urban, and walls generally capture their interest only when scrawled with graffiti. Goldsworthy, too, plays in the junk yards of the world, but his are strewn with the rubble of the eons, not last night's Chinese take-away. And then he is obstinately indifferent to cool, impervious to the laconic game-playing required for certification in conceptual subtlety. He has never made a secret of valuing clarity over irony and northern plainness over metropolitan chic. When, in the late eighties, his former dealer, Fabian Carlsson, offered him a long-term contract on condition that he move to London, the price was too high.

What is he doing, then, in downtown Manhattan? The commission from the Museum of Jewish Heritage (in collaboration with the Public Art Fund) is in essence an attempt to realize a natural process of catastrophe and redemption.

LES OUVRIERS DU PARADIS / red cell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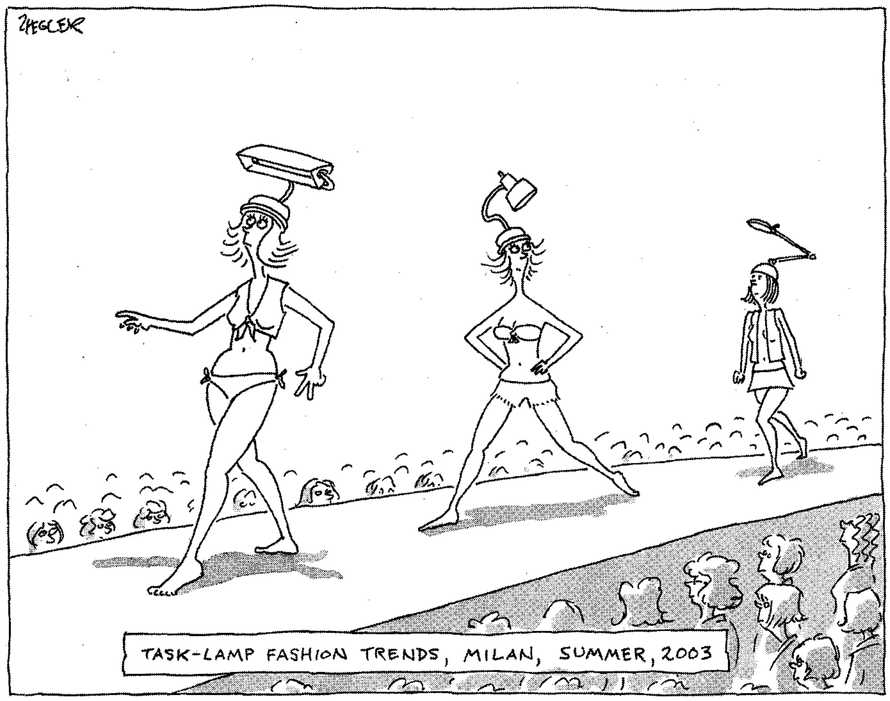
No one encountering the stone garden will think it the work of a decorative artist. It is, instead, an encounter with the elemental. The benches are made of granite.

This is not to say that Goldsworthy wants the boulders to look as though they had just dropped in from the cosmos. The white scuff marks he has left on them testify to their many migrations: from fields near Barre, Vermont, where Goldsworthy and Ehrenberg discovered them, to the Connecticut quarry where they were hollowed, and thence to a Brooklyn holding yard, from which, finally, they were moved to Battery Park City and crane-lifted, gingerly, onto the roof of the museum. The fact that the stones had long ago been cleared from their original geological site by farmers needing agricultural land was a plus for Goldsworthy, though he had to convince one incensed member of a local commune that he was not uprooting the rocks from an ancestral resting place. But wandering stones seem right for a Jewish memorial garden, especially one that faces outward across the broad slate-green river to merciful stopping places: Ellis Island and the Statue of Liberty. Goldsworthy, who has himself travelled a good deal in the making of his work, felt the weight of impending repose as the last boulders were moved onto the roof.

Much was still to be done. The concrete plinths on which the boulders are settled needed to be covered, along with the rest of the garden bed, with the gold-brown gravel that Goldsworthy had chosen to set off his gray monoliths. A watering system for the trees had to be installed and tested. The garden space is contained on two sides by five-foot walls made of granite panels. Atop one wall is a planter running the length of the space, which is to be filled with flowers and shrubs, and Goldsworthy worries that this will prettify the meditative austerity of the site. Worse still, as rock No. 15 was lowered to the roof terrace, Goldsworthy learned that a corner jutting over the garden, and in the view of anyone looking toward the harbor, might be covered by a trellis. The coming of creepers does not make him happy. But for the moment the work seems wonderfully well done, a poignant metaphysical conceit strongly realized, the crush and mass of history penetrated by the germination of hope.

The derrick men, led by their athletic crew boss, J. B. Jones, from Blakely, Georgia, sporting a nifty head scarf and with more graceful moves than Alvin Ailey, have got into the spirit of the thing. As one of the last of the boulders drifts, seemingly weightless, onto its receiving plinth, J.B. talks the rock down, shouting, "Whoa! Treat the *lady* nice and easy," and yells to Goldsworthy as the titan settles, "You like? You *like*?" He does. ♦



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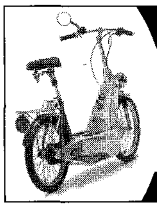

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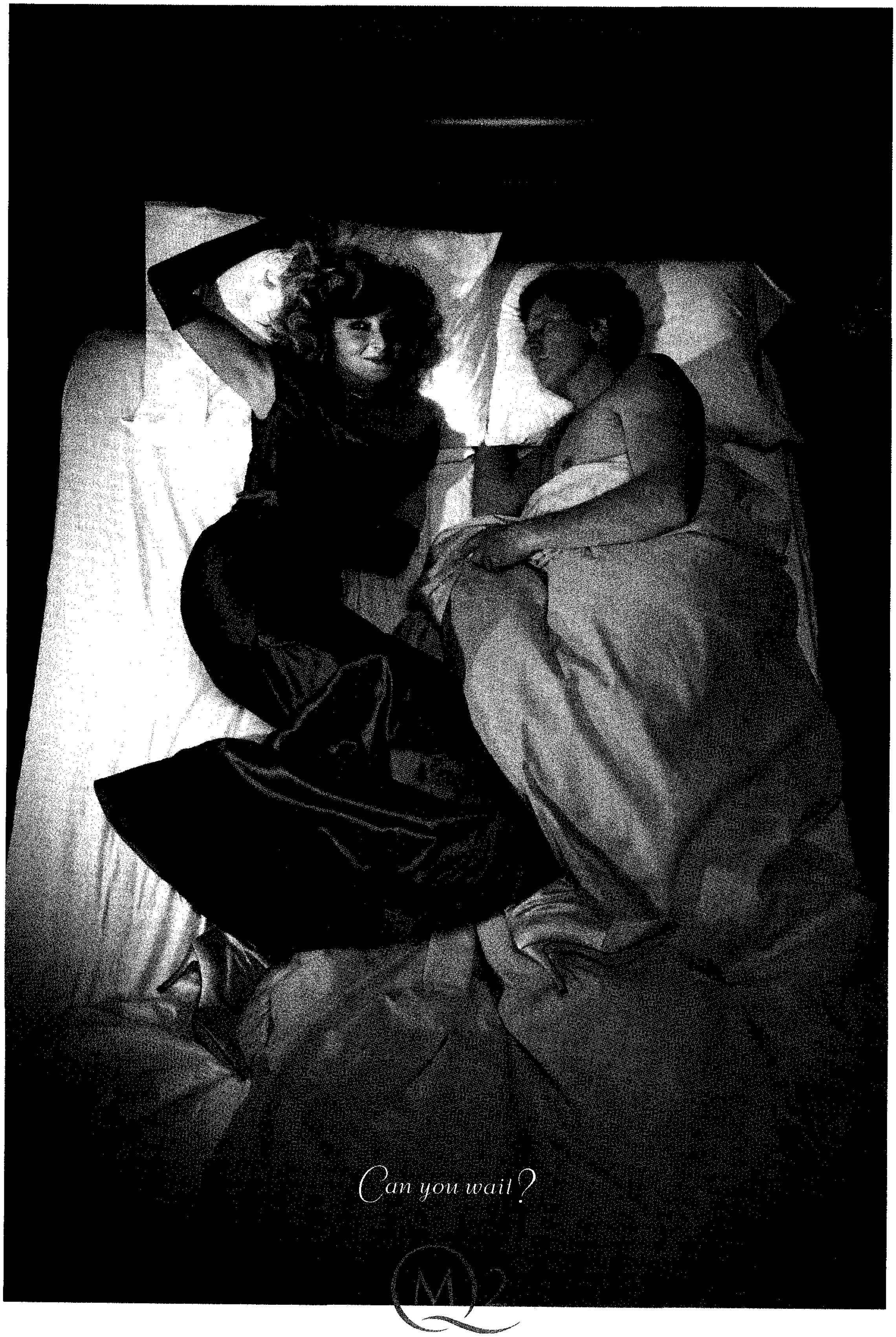
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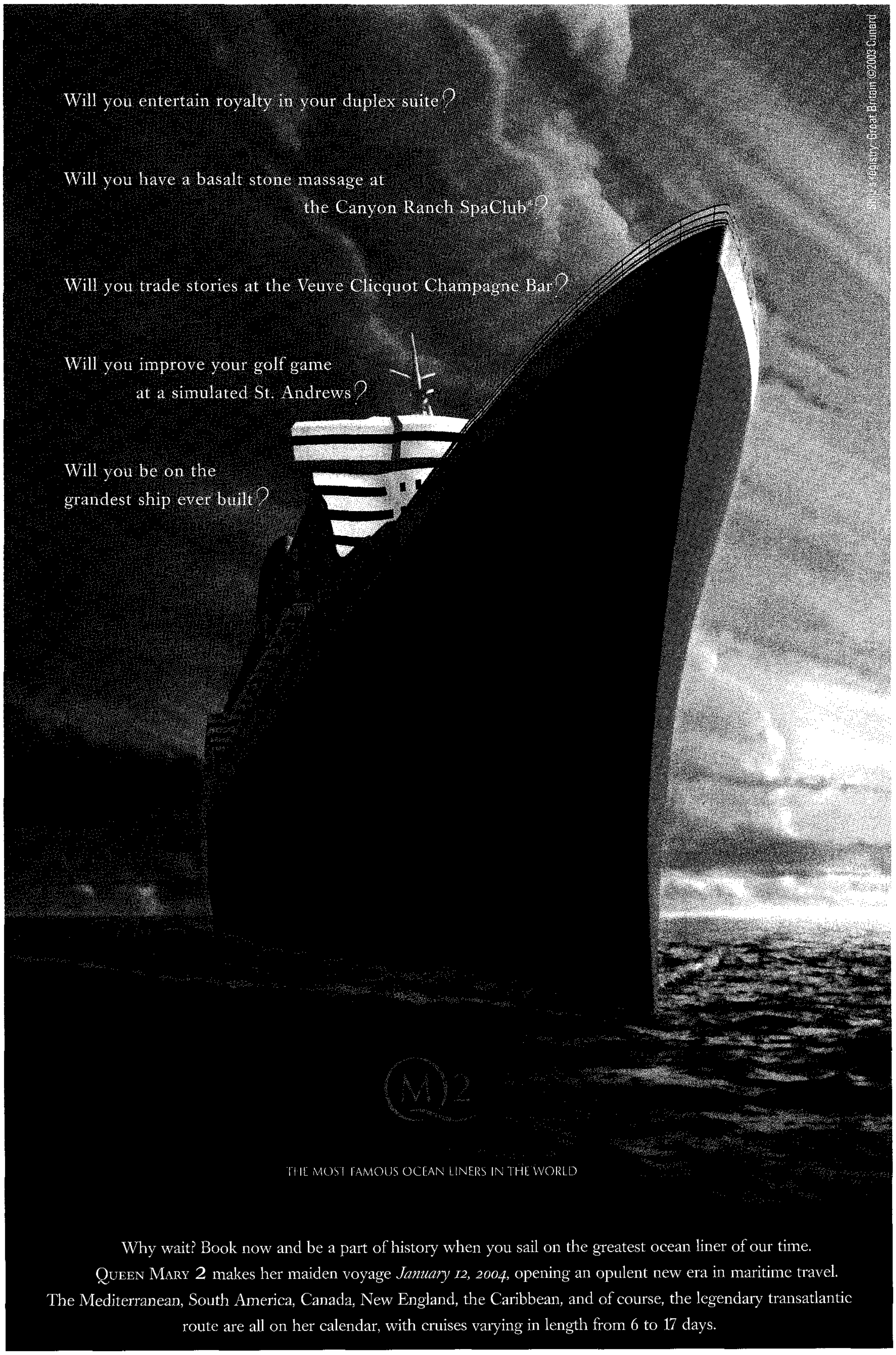
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FICTION

VICIOUS CIRCLE

BY THOMAS McGUANE

John Briggs sat on his porch on a dreary hot August day, a glass of ice water sweating in his hand, listening to opera on the radio. The white borders of the screen doors were incandescent with mountain summer. Through them he could see the high windswept ridge above his house, where the low bunchgrass could not get a hold, leaving only a seam of shale to overlook the irrigated valley. Earlier, at the farmers' market, he'd strolled among the pleasant displays of food and crafts. A bearded youth offered handmade walking sticks; next to him, with a cage full of rabbits, a woman in Chiapas folk costume sold angora tooth-fairy pillows while tugging strands of angora from a rabbit asleep in her lap. An extraordinary assortment of concrete yard animals surrounded a display of bird feeders with folded expired Montana license plates for roofs. A hearty woman with her fists on her hips offered English delphiniums, which, she explained again and again, had never been crossed with Pacific Giants, "not ever." The Hutterites, in suspenders and straw cowboy hats, had a vast array of vegetables, and their long table faced lines of people five deep, eyes fixed on the produce. A girl in jeans and a bustier played a harp, almost inaudible over the sound of the crowd, beside a table displaying geodes and specimens of quartz.

Briggs had a large shopping bag into which he placed his purchases as he gathered them: carrots, kohlrabi, baby beets bought from a woman in a Humane Society T-shirt, and Flathead Lake cherries from an old man in an "Official Party Shirt" from Carlos 'n Charlie's in Cozumel. A woman with the forearms of a plumber spotted Briggs and stepped from behind a meagre display of homegrown lavender and blocked his path. She gazed at him fixedly and, as he grew uncomfortable, asked, "Is anything coming to you?"

Briggs shook his head tentatively. The woman let out a vehement laugh with a faint whistle in it. A mirthless grin spread ear to ear.

"Is it possible," she asked, "that you don't remember me at all? Two A.M.? January? Roswell, New Mexico? Ring a bell?"

Trying to conceal his discomfort, Briggs said that he was afraid it was possible that he didn't remember.

"You glutton!" she roared.

He could see that the onlookers were not on his side. The woman followed him for several yards, staring accusingly as he made his way through lanes of boxed produce. He heard the word "glutton" again, over the otherwise gentle murmur of the market. He also heard her ask the crowd whether people like him ever got enough. She was right: it was outrageous that such a thing could have slipped his mind, whatever it was. He was dismayed that he had shared some potent event with this woman and was not even able to recall it. He tried again, but nothing came. Perhaps it had been long ago, but, no, she'd said it was *January.* Was he losing his memory?

RICHARD PRINCE, "NURSE BARCLAY'S DILEMMA" 2002. COURTESY BARBARA GLADSTONE GALLERY

He stopped to look at the midsummer light bouncing off the hoods of the cars lined up alongside the park. Someone touched his elbow, and he turned to a young woman with a blue bandanna tied around her neck. She had a basket on one arm filled with parsnips, heavy August tomatoes, onions shedding golden paper in the hard light. "Don't blame yourself," she said shyly. "She's asked a dozen other people the same question and they couldn't remember, either." The woman seemed to redden. Briggs was greatly absorbed by her gray eyes and her fine, clear forehead; he thought it was the kind of face that only profound innocence could produce.

Her name was Olivia, she said, and she was buying vegetables for herself and her father. Not today, not tomorrow, not until Wednesday could she meet for a drink. In fact, she didn't want to meet for a drink at all, but in the end they could think of no convenient meeting places other than bars. He would have to wait.

Olivia was on time. She'd suggested the Stockman Hotel, which had a popular bar and was midway between their homes. The yellow cotton dress she wore was stylish but out of date, maybe a generation out of date, and must not have originally belonged to her—an elegant hand-me-down. The bar was busy with ranchers, an insurance man, a woman who drove for U.P.S., and two palladium miners, and everyone was talking, except for three men from a highway crew who didn't know anyone and stared straight ahead holding their beers with both hands. An empty booth remained, and Briggs led her there, questioning his own suggestion so as not to appear coercive. Olivia sat quickly, clasping her fingers, elbows on the table, and looked around. She seemed happy. Her shoulder-length hair was parted in the middle and pulled behind small, pretty ears that were unpierced. She had a sensual mouth for a shy girl, though he supposed he ought not to see that as a contradiction.

"Do you know something," she said, almost whispering. "I don't remember your name."

"John Briggs."

"Oh. I see. Just like that."

"What do you mean?"

"I mean . . . it's just two syllables!"

"I know. It's like a dirge or a march, isn't it?" he said.

"John-Briggs-John-Briggs-John-Briggs," she chanted.

"Exactly. In second grade, Roland Ozolinsch sat next to me, and he had such a hard time learning to spell his own name that I became grateful for mine's brevity. I worried about other things instead. I wished for jet-black hair that'd lie flat like Superman's." His own hair was russet brown and sprang out. He wished he'd said "shortness" instead of "brevity." There was something entirely silly about the phrase "grateful for mine's brevity," but it seemed to have gone unnoted.

A barmaid came to their table, in jeans and a T-shirt advertising a whale-watching boat on Prince of Wales Island: the breaching whale in the drawing was bigger than the boat, whose worshipful passengers were lined up like a choir. She knew Olivia, and they exchanged pleasantries. Briggs ordered a St. Pauli Girl and Olivia ordered a double shot of Jim Beam, with a water back. Briggs was careful not to react. When the order was in, Olivia studied the time on her watch and then on the wall clock, before adjusting the watch. "Four-forty-two," she said.

He guessed that she was nearly, but not quite, thirty, at least a decade younger than he. She wore no rings or other insignia and, in general, was remarkably undecorated, though a glance revealed possible eyeliner and just enough lipstick, the absence of which might have been odd—not pretentious but odd. Her eyes travelled around the bar and then landed on him just as their drinks arrived. "Still hot," she said, and smiled brilliantly.

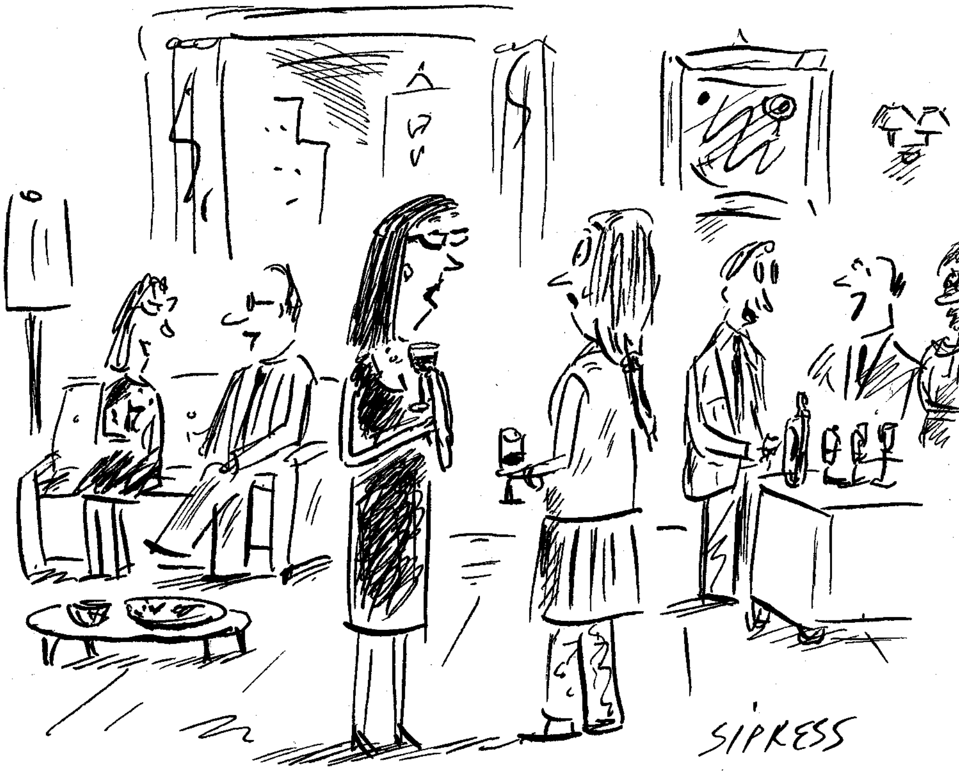
This all felt like a journey to Briggs, though he couldn't have said why.

"Still hot," he concurred, thinking, I need to add something. Hot, plus what? Dry? Windy?

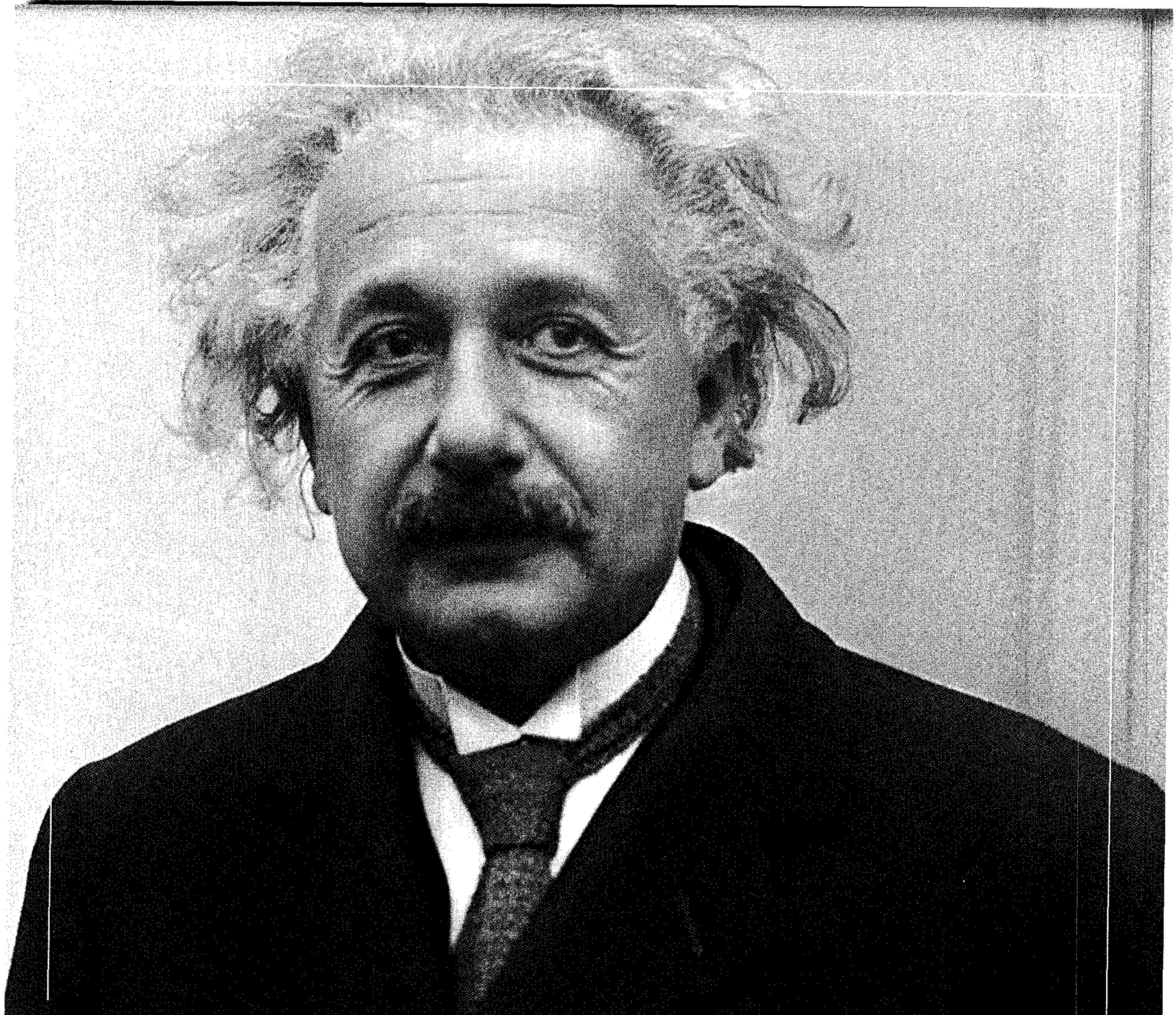
"Drought drought drought," she said, much as she'd said his name, in modest march time. "We lost our well and had to drill another, two hundred feet at I forget how much a foot but a lot. Ruined our yard, that man out there with his machine, hammering away."

"I saw on the bank that it's ninety-seven." Jesus Christ, Briggs thought, tell her you saw a zebra!

As she drank, reacting to



"I don't speak Yoga. I speak Pilates."



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1 P.M.
Paul Muldoon • Simon Schama

2 P.M.
Anthony Lane • Zadie Smith

3 P.M.
Jhumpa Lahiri • ZZ Packer

4 P.M.
Edward Koren • Calvin Trillin

5 P.M.
Susan Orlean • Alec Wilkinson

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 21ST

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the bitterness of the whiskey, she looked straight at him. "You know what would be so sweet," she said, "is if you'd get me a paper from the lobby." Smiling in compliance, Briggs got up and went to the lobby. At a table in the large bay window, three young Mormon men in suits craned to watch the heatstruck pedestrians. One unfurled the sports section of the *Gazette;* another leaned forward, holding his head in his hands. Briggs dropped a quarter into the honor-system jar and took a copy of the paper back to Olivia. She had a new drink in front of her.

The bar's manager, Jerry Warren, who was small, ingratiating, and somehow like a frog in a polo shirt, sidled up to the table. Olivia knew him.

"In September," Warren said, "I'm going to Ireland—"

"Are you Irish?" Briggs interrupted.

"—no—to hike the Ring of Kerry, booze till two, feel up German girls—"

Briggs glanced at an expressionless Olivia.

"—and visit ring forts or the odd castle. The brochure promises you your money back if you don't, like, burst into spontaneous verse by Day Two, though I expect most of the poetry ends up being directed at your raincoat." Warren rested his hand on the table, and then slowly extended a forefinger. "Next round on me."

"The trouble is, when you just want to get to know someone," Olivia said with surprising volubility once Warren was gone, "there's no such thing as neutral ground. Like just now, people come up and assume . . . But, well, here's another round." She raised her face in gratitude to the barmaid. "Jerry always tells me his travel plans, no matter how late it gets. He has some crazy jet-lag remedies you ought to hear. By the next morning, I can hardly remember what they were."

"It's five o'clock," the barmaid said. "You're entitled to all of this you want."

When she was gone, Olivia said, "I suppose we did start before five. That woman at the farmers' market, she must have had someone in mind."

"Funny way to figure out who."

"Or she was just, you know, revisiting the experience."

"But that's how we met!" This didn't feel right. Briggs added, "Neighbor."

After thinking about this, she asked, "Have you noticed that out in the country 'neighbor' is a verb?"

This struck Briggs as a sudden move away from intimacy. Five o'clock had brought a crowd big enough to elbow up to all surfaces—not just the bar but the walls—and the air of day's-end ebullience was infectious to Briggs, who was a loner and tired of being a loner but seemed unable to do anything about it. "It's kind of aggressive, isn't it?" he said. "Usually about how someone failed to neighbor."

"Yes," she sighed. "And the speaker always makes you think that *he* neighbors even while he's asleep." She covered Briggs's hands with her own. "How 'bout you?"

"I don't do a lot of neighboring," he said.

Olivia took this in sombrely. "I must strike you as desperate," she said. The tone had changed, and her smile was slack.

"You do not."

"Thank you."

She was nearly finished with her complimentary double, and Briggs, on his third shell of draft, realized that she'd put away six shots of whiskey, which suddenly seemed to be sinking in; the slow movement of her eyes beneath lowered lids, which he had first taken for flirtatious warmth, now appeared to be the start of some narcosis.

"That Ring of Kerry thing doesn't sound like much fun, does it?" she said into space.

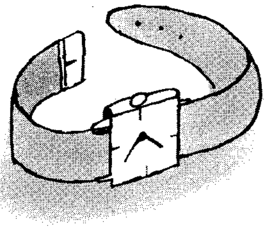
"Oh, I'll bet it's beautiful there."

"But just getting through a wet day to end up in a pub . . . Is that the reward? And where did he get that about German girls?" Only now did she look up at Briggs.

"He was probably just trying to entertain us."

Olivia looked surprised. "Oh! Well. Now I'll be grateful. I'm so dense." At that moment, Jerry Warren passed their booth. "Hey, Jerry! That was great," she called out. He stopped.

"What was great, Olivia?"



"About the ring of German girls in raincoats."

Jerry glanced at Briggs before moving on. "If I can just get through this drought," he said as he plunged into the crowd.

"What does he *mean*?" Olivia asked. "I'm missing connection after connection." She gestured to the barmaid for another round. The barmaid waved back and Olivia commented, "I really like her, but she's a huge slut. Ready for another?"

"I don't know if I can drink more beer. My teeth are floating."

"Your teeth are—?"

"I'm bursting with beer."

"Maybe you should drink something more concentrated. Beer's mostly water. I wish alcohol came in the same size as an aspirin. You just wear out your digestion trying to cop a buzz. And this stuff"—she pointed—"tastes like *kerosene*. Your teeth are floating! That's a scream."

Briggs didn't feel comfortable doing more to prevent the arrival of another round, but when she'd finished it he wished he had.

"Olivia."

"What?"

"You O.K.?"

"Where are we going with this?"

"I thought you were going to faint."

"Oh, how wrong you are."

Briggs caught Jerry Warren's eye and made a writing gesture with his right hand on his left hand. Warren winked his understanding, and Briggs turned back to Olivia. "Let's get outside while we have a little of this day left," he said. He could tell that this was perceived from a great distance. He stood up to complete the suggestion and then felt it best to extend a hand, which Olivia took as she got to her feet and quickly leaned against him.

"Going to have to do it like this, aren't I?"

"Not a problem. Out we go."

Briggs escorted her through the front door with such success that their exit was barely noticed. The one woman who stared was told by Olivia, "No worries," in an Australian accent. Once outside, the heat hit her and she began to topple. Briggs had to take her around the corner to find a quiet spot. "I want to help you here, Olivia. You're hav-

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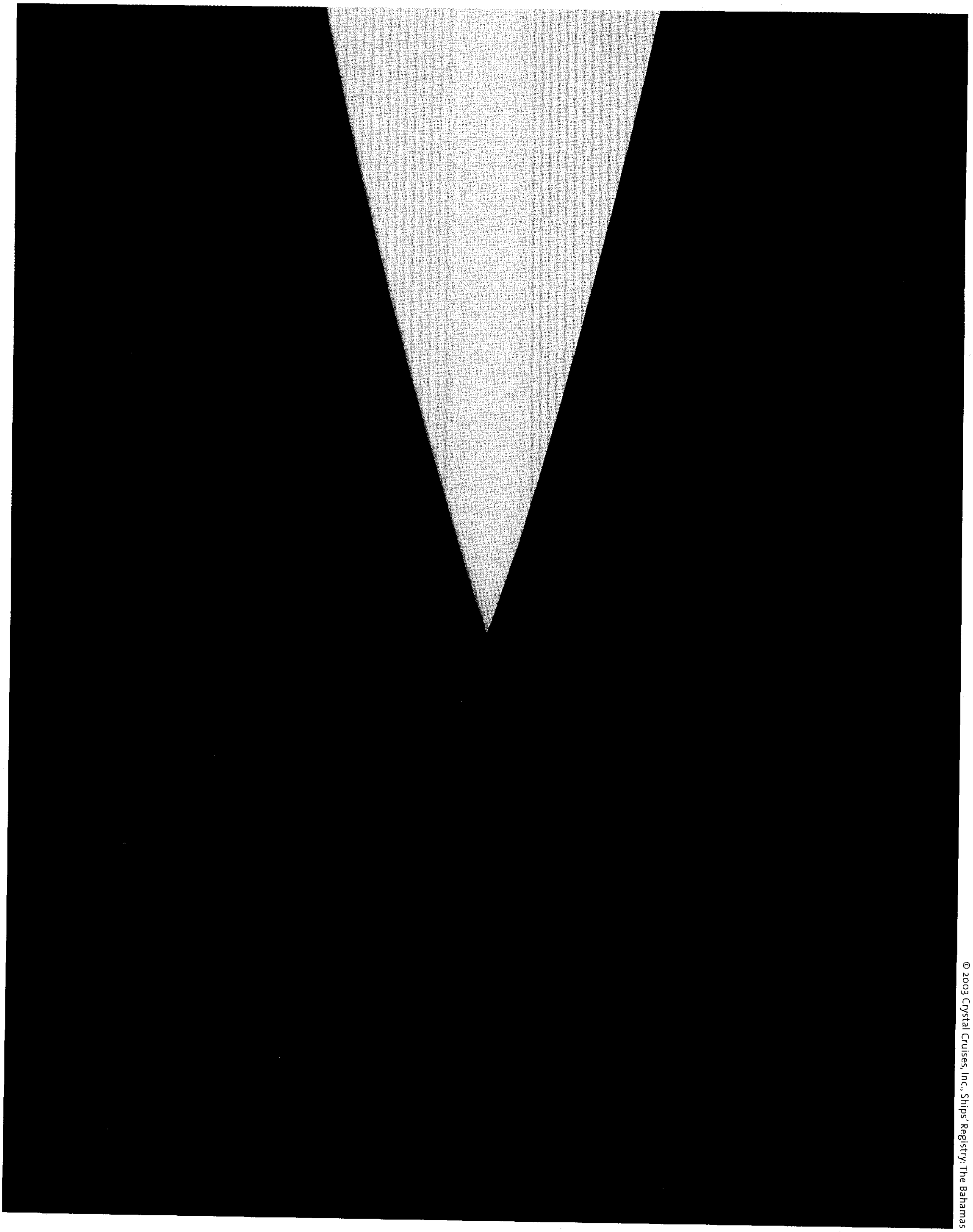

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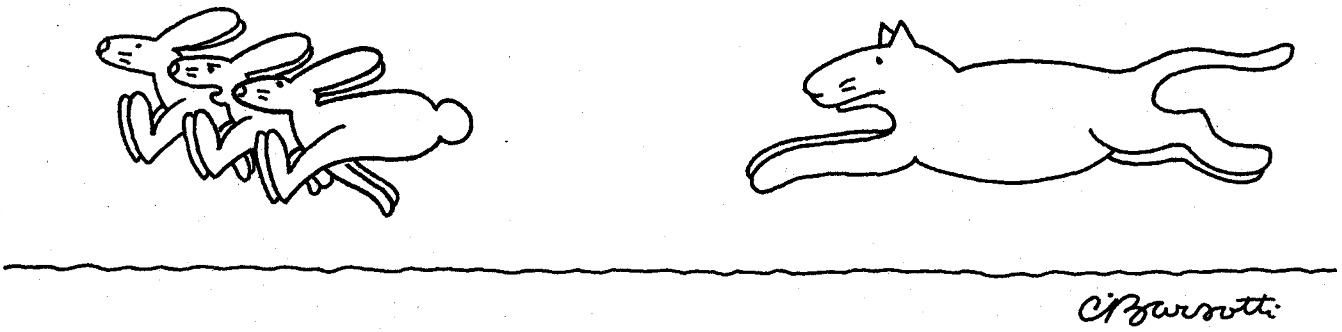

"If you go left and Albert goes right, where do I go?"

• •

ing a bit of trouble with your balance."

"How did I let this *hap*-pen?" she said. "A little birdie says it's time for me to scoot." With her hands at her shoulders, fingers fluttering outward, she did the birdie.

"How about if you let me drive you home?"

"*Bor*-ing."

"I'm afraid I require it. Where is your car?"

"A: We identify make and model."

"Can you do that for me? And parking spot?"

She looked left and right. "You know, John Briggs, I'm going to flunk that test."

"No problem. We'll go in mine."

He helped her into his twenty-year-old sedan. She told him that they'd be lucky if the jalopy made it to her house. The car had old-style seat belts, and by fastening hers across her lap he produced from Olivia a languorous smile. "There!" he said briskly, to undo the smile, and went around to his side, got in, looked over at her amiably, and turned the key.

"Doesn't look like you're going to try to take advantage of me."

"Nope."

"It wouldn't be hard. All aboard!" She imitated a train whistle.

They headed north, and just as they left town she said, "Hey, there's my car!" But then she was uncertain again. It didn't really matter to Briggs, unless she turned out to be right in wondering whether his car would make it. They were halfway to her house before she spoke again. She said, "Ooh, boy, this is a bad idea."

Grassland spread in either direction from the road to the horizon. From the west, a thunderstorm, zigzagged with wires of lightning, was moving swiftly toward them, and the road ahead began to darken with rain.

Briggs drove without trying to talk until they reached Olivia's town. She pointed to various turns and landmarks, letting her hand fall back onto her lap between times. The trees formed a canopy above the street where she said she lived, a street on which either invidious competition or the boundless love of property had prevailed in the form of one perfect lawn after another, and hedges that seemed to have been purchased in sections. At length, she said, "This is it, with the red shutters. Who else has red shutters? Nobody. Just us. Has red shutters. Have red shutters."

Briggs made sure that the coast was clear for assistance to the house. Olivia had lost some ground since they set out and it seemed unlikely that she would be able to walk safely. A man in bicycle shorts went by, leading a Newfoundland; there was a rollerblader, a very old and slow woman pulling a wagon full of groceries, a Federal Express delivery to the house next door, and then it was time to rouse Olivia all over again and go for it.

"I'm so sorry," she said as he steadied her beside the car. "I see the jalopy worked better than I thought it would. Shouldn't have said what I said. 'Never ridicule what you don't understand,' my father told me."

Briggs reached for the door but it opened before he touched it, revealing a severe-looking older man in a starched white shirt. He had a high domed forehead and piercing blue eyes. He inspected Briggs and, speaking to him but looking at Olivia, who stood with her head hanging, said, "We're at it again, I see."

Briggs helped her into the front hall and handed her arm to the man, who he guessed was her father, expecting to retreat to his car, but the man closed the door behind the three of them and said, "Wait here," in what, in other circumstances, might have seemed an intolerably brusque tone. Briggs stood in the hallway as Olivia went off without a word, climbing the stairs with the aid of her father. He could make out the corner of a dining-room table, a section of transom window, dark wainscoting, the old family photographs on either side of the stairway. The father returned.

"So sorry to leave you standing here," he said, guiding Briggs forcefully into the house. "I'm Olin Halliday, Olivia's father. Not too proud to eat in the kitchen, are you?" Briggs obediently followed Halliday through doors that swung open, then shut. The kitchen lived up to more than ordinary domestic requirements, with a freestanding chopping block, a commercial-grade stove, and a double-doored freezer. Halliday pointed to a dripping bag suspended over a large mixing bowl. "Making cottage cheese. Not ready yet. I hope you like brisket. I like brisket way too well, and I never seem to get it quite like I want it, though this time I'm close. I try to smoke it long enough to start the neighbors complaining. Then I know I'm on the right track. Like everything else, you have to put in the time."

Finally, they were seated, on stools at the chopping block. Halliday carved the brisket with a broad, razor-sharp knife, which he wielded rapidly, each perfect slice just tipping over of its own weight as he sliced the next. Coleslaw, "my

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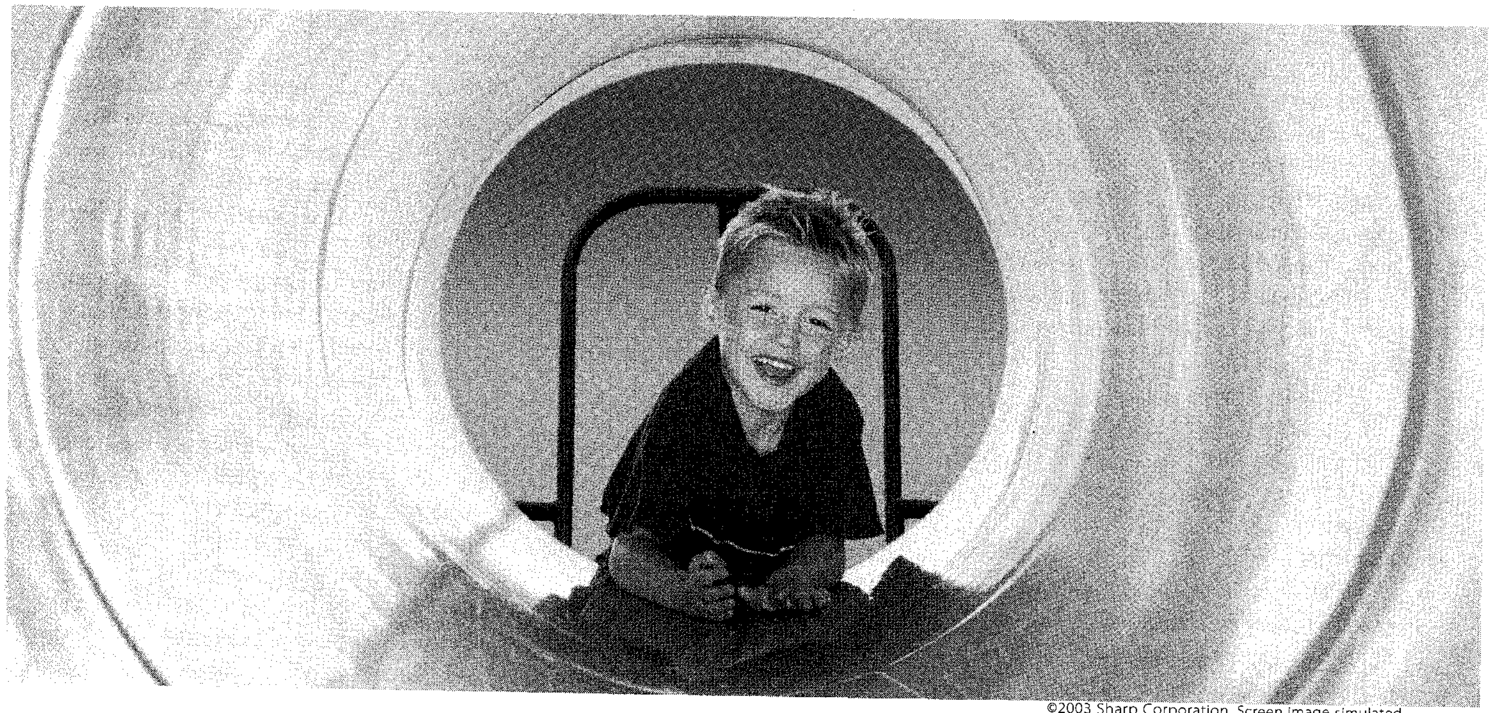

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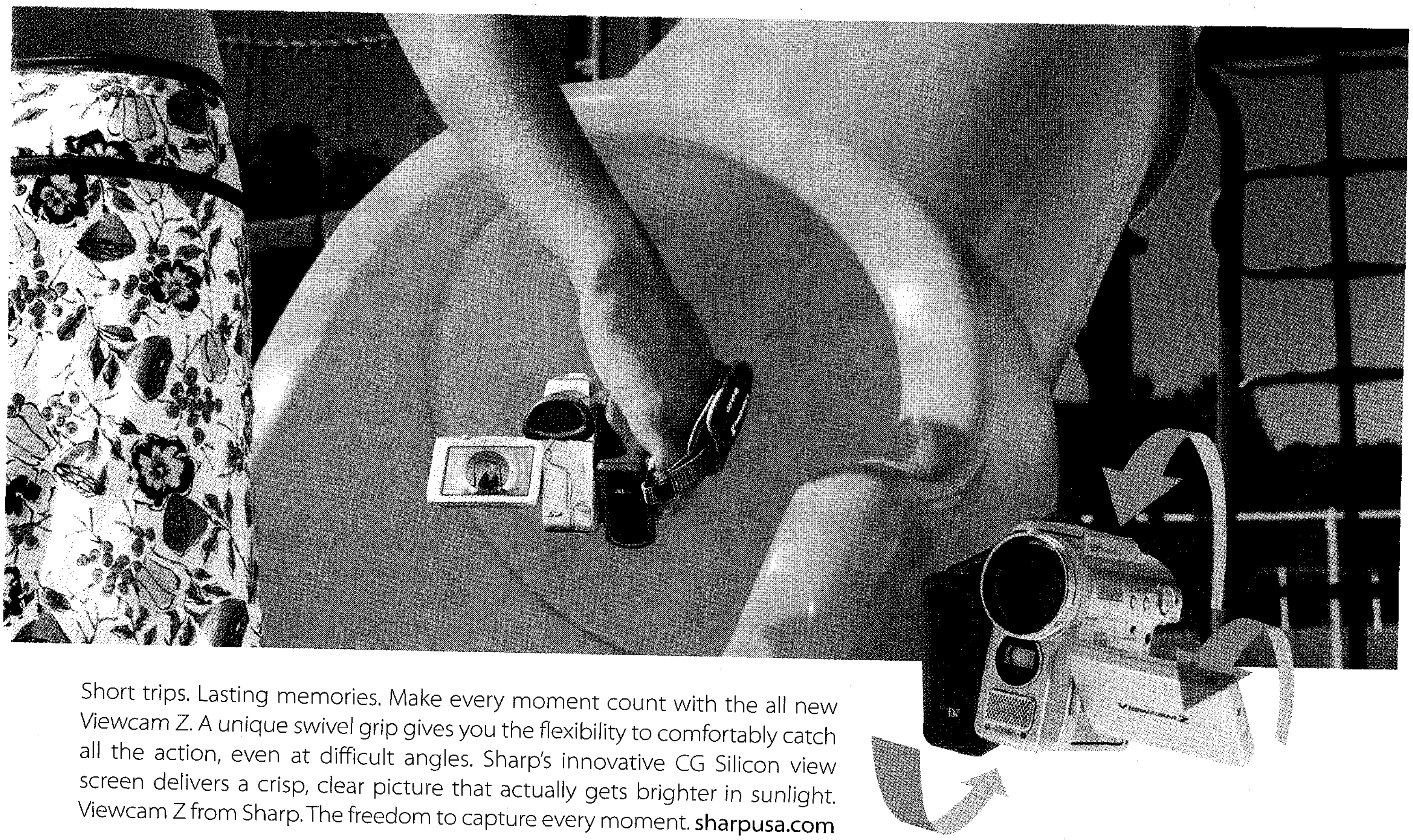

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tomatoes,” beet greens, corn bread, and iced tea. “Should have beer, but I can’t keep it in the house,” Halliday said. Then he began to eat with the absorption of a hungry man eating alone. Briggs waited a moment, then followed suit, the food so good it created an appetite.

“As you have seen,” Halliday said, food still in his mouth, punctuating his words with his fork, “Olivia cannot drink. Cannot but does, and shouldn’t. She is the kind of alcoholic that is usually described as ‘hopeless,’ but of course she is not hopeless, and I’m not without hope. Are you?”

“I hardly know Olivia.”

“There’s a difference between taking responsibility, Mr. Briggs, and blaming yourself for everything. There should be a line between the two. Olivia does not have that line.”

With every remark, Halliday scrutinized Briggs, and because of his sky-blue eyes his gaze may have seemed more penetrating than he intended. Just then Olivia called down in a near-screech, *“Tell him what they did to me!”* Halliday and Briggs looked at each other in silence, Briggs’s alarmed.

Briggs said, “What does she mean by that?”

“It’s always something new,” Halliday said, looking away. “She has hung on to her job at the hospital. I’ve helped there, but an argument can still be made that she’s viable.”

“You tell him!”

“I’m afraid this could go on. Have you had enough to eat?”

“Yes.”

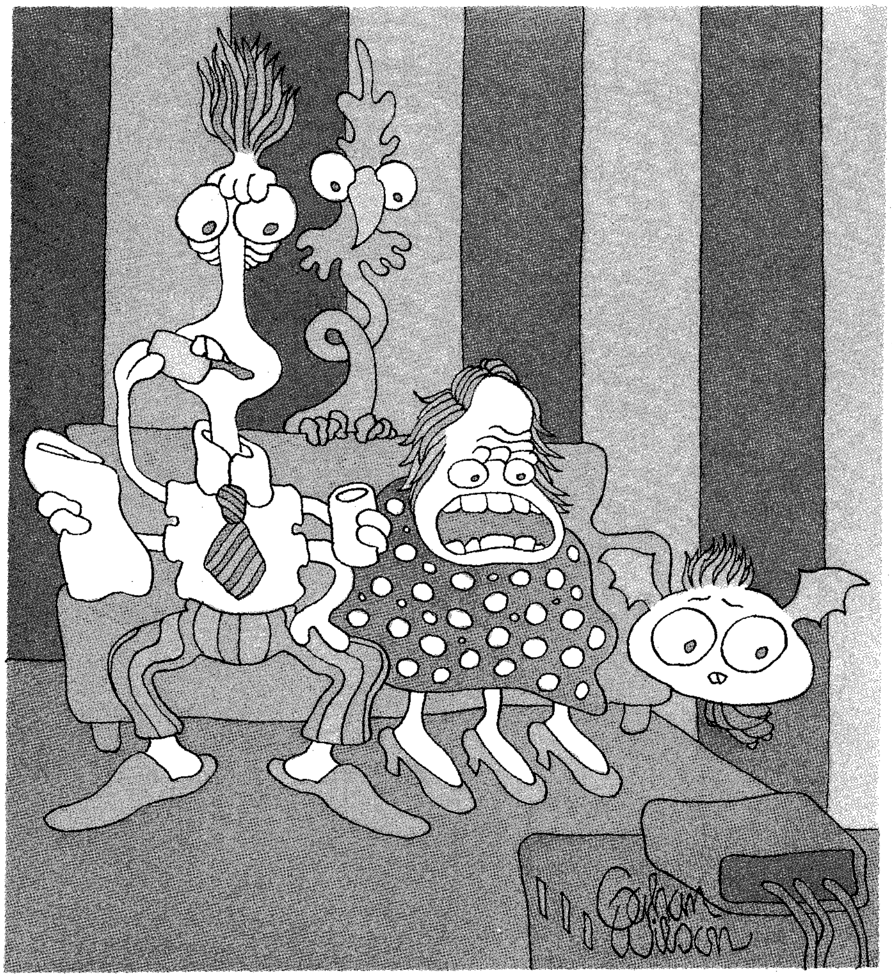
“Don’t be worried. This is the best place she could be.”

“I hope so.”

“I’m her father, Mr. Briggs, and I’m a doctor.”

Briggs felt no urgency to respond. After a moment had passed, he asked, “Where is Olivia’s mother?”

“Olivia’s mother is no longer living. I delivered Olivia and I adopted her. Olivia’s mother was not married.”



“I just don’t get these reality shows!”

“Has her mother been dead for a long time?”

Halliday smiled cheerlessly. “She’s been dead almost since Olivia was born. She jumped off Carter’s Bridge and went all the way to North Dakota before what the fauna of the Great Plains had left of her was found. It was sad, it was unforeseen, and it was certainly not anybody’s fault, least of all Olivia’s, but Olivia doesn’t see it that way.”

“Have you done anything to help her get over it?”

“Nothing that has worked. You’ve seen that. But now I’m going to try something new and, to tell the truth, I’m optimistic. Olivia is almost pathologically shy, and I’m convinced that this is connected to the grudge that she holds against herself. She is quite dependent upon me, especially financially, which has caused plenty of resentment. That’s my only lever, but it’s a good one. Anyway, long story short, I am going to require Olivia to join Toastmasters International.”

Halliday watched complacently as his new idea sank in. Briggs suspected that he wasn’t the first stranger on whom it had been tried out. He began to wonder what other harebrained cures Halliday might have attempted on the poor girl.

“I don’t get it.”

“You don’t have to get it. Olivia has to get it. I’m going to help Olivia ground herself. I want to revise her core values. You don’t know the boyfriends she’s had. I want her to learn to recognize and avoid cheapskates. I want her to boldly share her message. I want her to quit going off on tangents. I think that, if she looked within and learned the skills of public speaking, she would delight audiences with dynamic presentations by simply unleashing her inner self.”

“I’ve never heard of anything this crazy.”

“I take that as a compliment. It has never bothered me to be ahead of the crowd.”

Briggs left immediately, making his exit as rude as possible. As soon as he was under way in his car, he was aware of the smell of Olivia’s perfume, which was somehow more conspicuous in her absence. He hardly had a profound connection to her, but he could not get her out of his mind. For the first time, his car actually did seem like a jalopy. And Halliday had surely taken him for a cheap-

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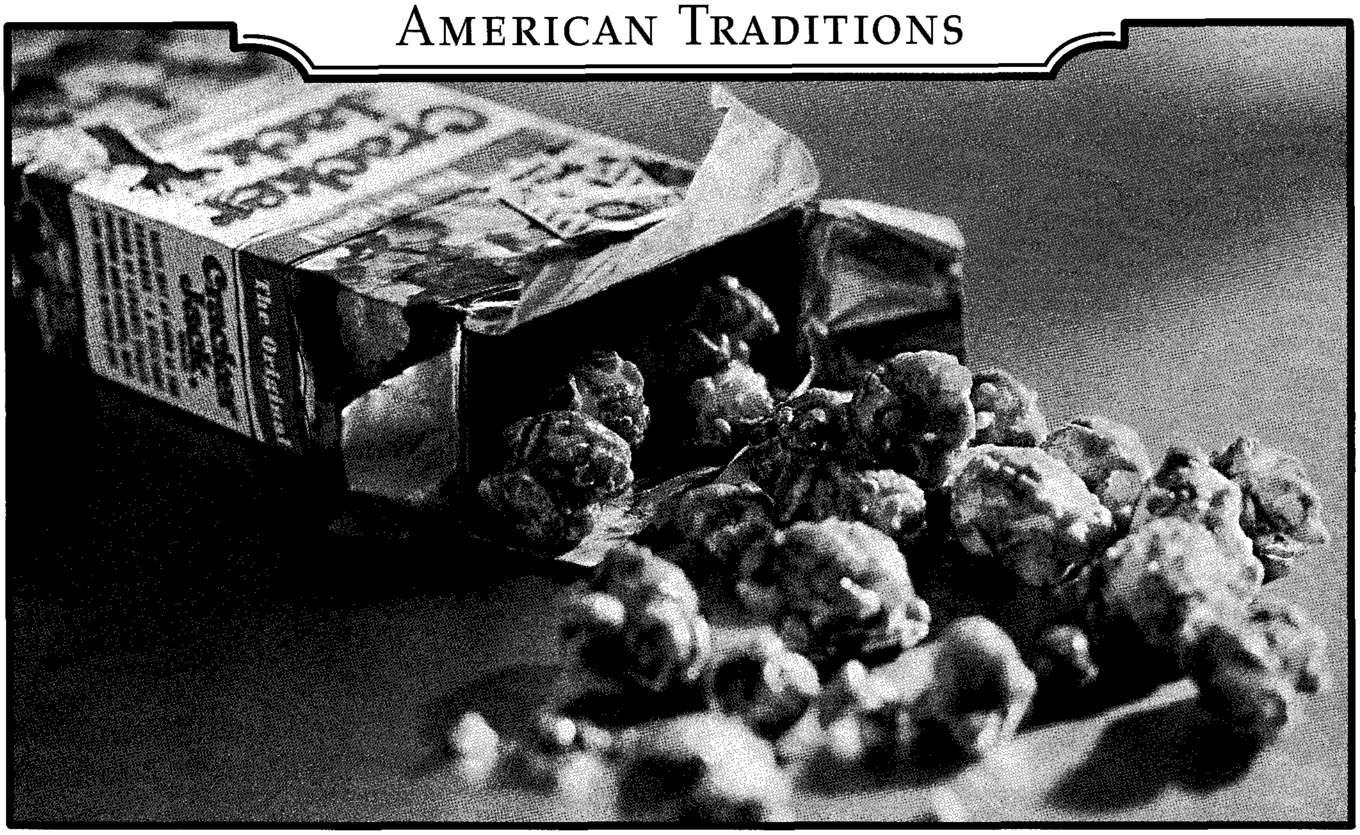

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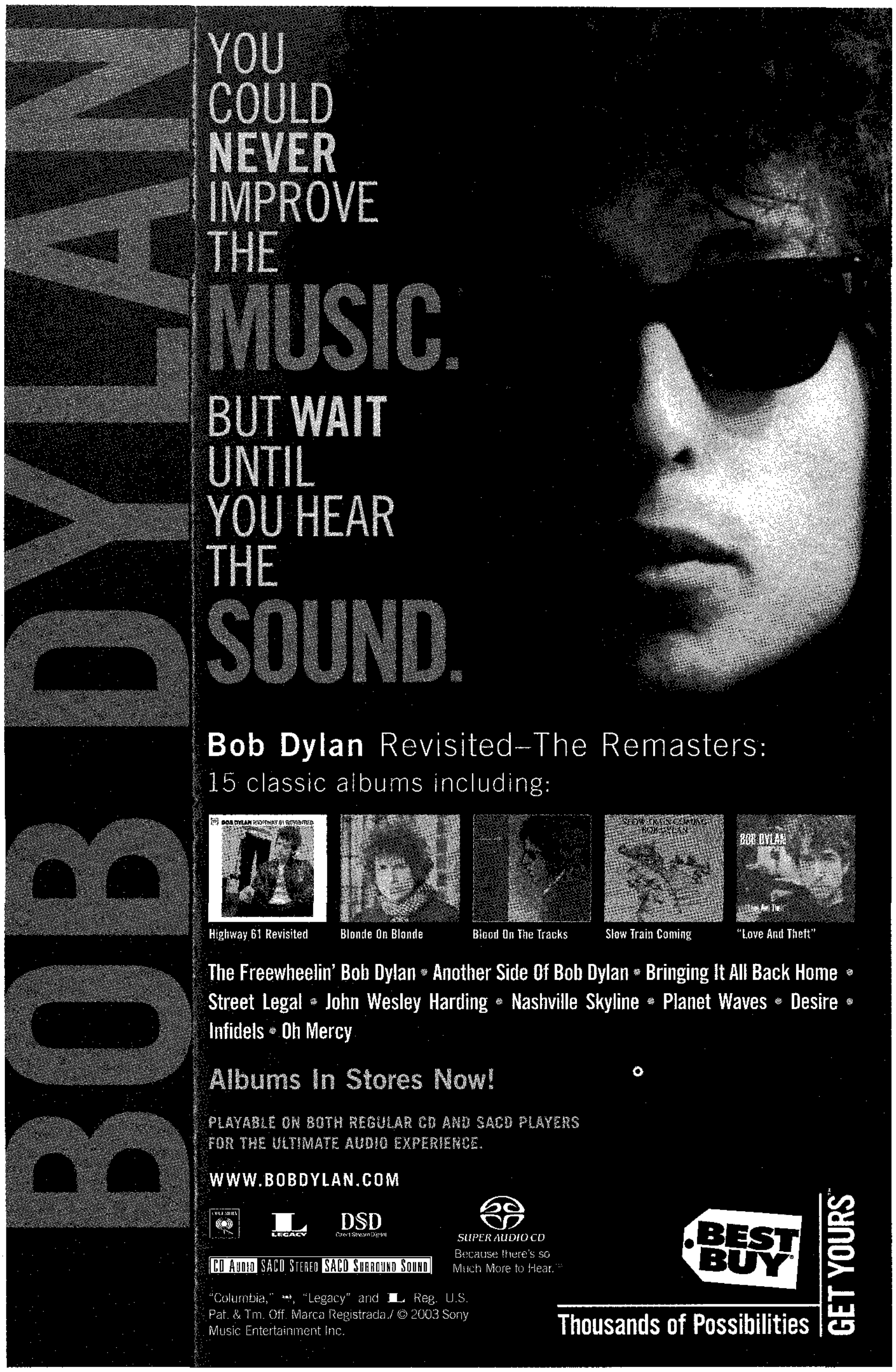
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skate. "I don't have a garage," he could have explained. "Why leave a good car sitting out in the weather?" This was the first of his imaginary dialogues with Olivia. One about drinking left him believing that she was possessed, an idea whose tawdry allure was both obvious and appealing. He imagined a priestly intervention in which evil spirits were exorcised and Halliday, with his pop theories, stayed well to the rear. Briggs understood that these daydreams were meant to allay some heartache.

Briggs spent most of September working on his place, getting ready to go back to work. He repainted the shutters, a maddening job because of all the louvres. He set pack-rat traps and pruned the raspberry patch. He alphabetized his library, a recurrent task, since he never put books back where they belonged. He changed the water filter in the basement and removed the ghastly mushrooms that had volunteered there. The lawn seemed to have stopped growing, so he put the mower in the garage. Next to the barn was a stack of old boards that had warped and rotted beyond use; he pulled the truck around in order to haul this trash to a safe place for burning. He was nearly finished when he reached for a heavy sheet of exterior plywood, which he had to raise on its edge to drag it to the truck. As he lifted it, he felt something strike his leg, like the blow of a stick. He raised the plywood higher and saw the coiled rattlesnake, dropped the plywood, and backed away with a chill. He drew up his pant leg and saw where the fangs had gone in and the slight reddening around the marks. He pulled off his work gloves and decided he'd take the back way to the hospital in his truck. He wondered how bad this was going to be.

It was a half-hour drive, and by the time he got there the ache and swelling had commenced seriously. He parked close to the emergency room, next to two old ambulances, and limped into the waiting room. The nurse, filling out forms, was a long time acknowledging him, and when she did so it was by the mere raising of her head. When he told her what was wrong, she told him to have a seat. Briggs thought, They must see a lot of snakebites. The spot where he'd been bitten was now quite enlarged

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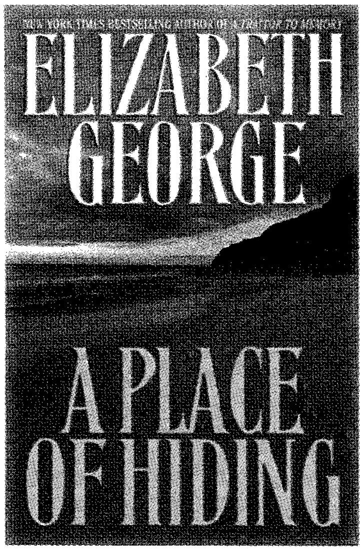
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"This is mystery writing at its most **complex and intelligent.**"
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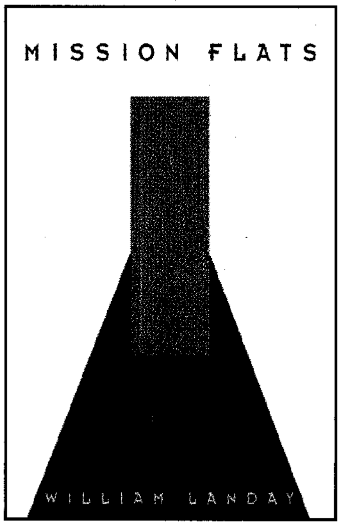
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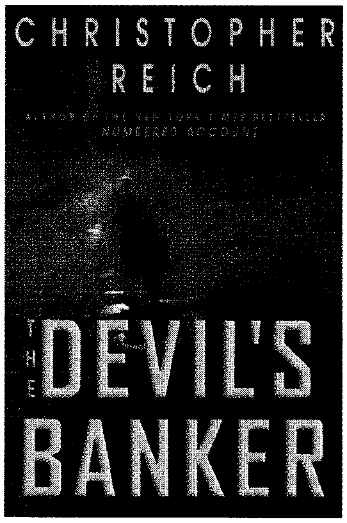
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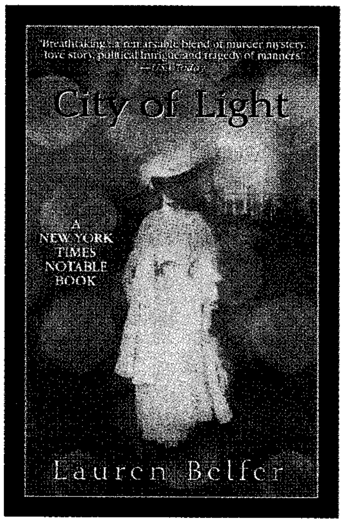
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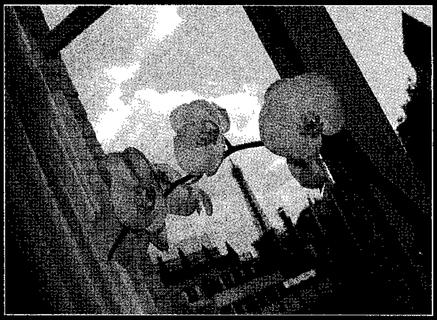
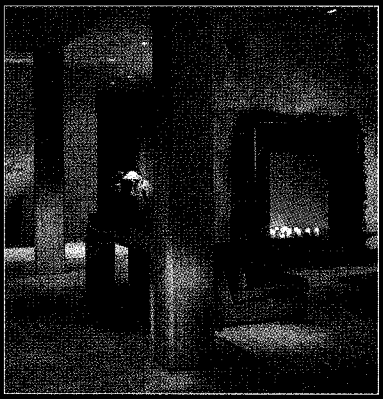
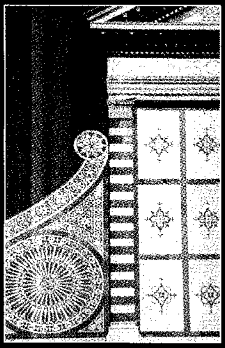
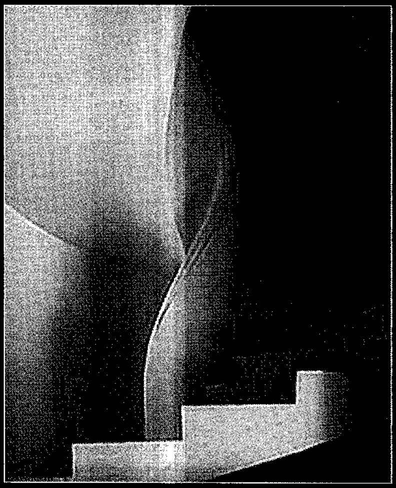
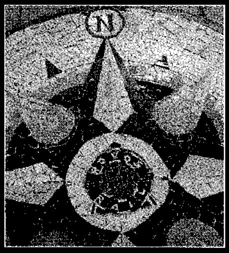
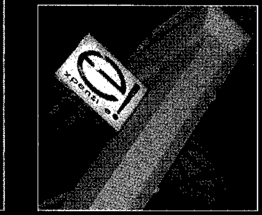












ÜBER CHIC

In a material world that's increasingly characterized by commodification and homogeneity, genuine "style" is becoming a hard thing to pin down. This is as true in travel as in anything else; hotels, restaurants, resorts, and retailers all go to greater lengths than ever before to convince us that they have panache. But what really qualifies something as stylish? Often, it's in a Name. A universally recognized purveyor of taste lends his or her imprimatur to a new venture to give it its bona fides (ergo the bumper crop of star hoteliers and chefs, or the trend in home collections from celebrity fashion designers). Other times, it's simply the right mix of globally coveted amenities, conspicuously personalized service, and real character.

by Maria Shollenbarger

MONTAGE: CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: COURTESY OF ROYAL EXCHANGE; COOPER-HEWITT; ROYAL EXCHANGE; HOTEL HEALDSBURG; CHIC RETREATS; SOHO STOREFRONT ©MICHAEL HOLTERMANN; KSAR-CHAR BAGH; FLORENTINE DETAIL, CHIC RETREATS; CENTER: VIEW FROM GEORGE V ©MICHAEL HOLTERMANN; MOSAIC COMPASS: POZOS RAIL

URBAN ROLODEX

In London, the name *is* the game: **myhotel Chelsea** in the Brompton Cross shopping district (35 Ixworth Place; 020 7225 7500; myhotels.co.uk) is all about you, whether your needs involve hypoallergenic pillows, aromatherapy treatments, a psychic reading, or a trip to one of two "Red Rooms" tucked behind the hotel's bar for private rendezvous. Designed by James Soane of the Project Orange studio and feng shui'd by expert William Spear, the hotel's seductive mix of antiques, contemporary furniture, and impeccably kitted-out clientele, make myhotel feel like a never-ending party at the home of someone's slightly mad but very cool rich uncle.

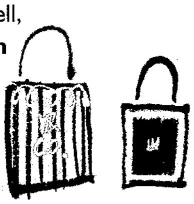
Onetime Momo chef Michel Giraud has opened **Aziz** in London's Fulham (24-32 Vanston Place; 020 7386 0086), serving Eastern Mediterranean and North African cuisines in a sexy red and white interior. Imported delicacies and to-go food can be had next door at the restaurant's gourmet shop, **Del'Aziz**. Sample tapas are cooked *a la plancha* (grilled on a hot plate) at **Fino** in the West End (33 Charlotte Street; 020 7813 8010). Owned by the Hart brothers, Sam (who ran Mexico City's nightspot Colmillo) and Eddie (who trained at the Michelin-starred Hambleton Hall) joined Chef Jean-Philippe Patruno on palate-refining tours of Barcelona and the Balearic Islands, which inspired Fino's menu.

INSIDE INFORMATION

TRAINS AND BOATS AND PLANES > South Africa-based luxury train **Rovos Rail** combines five-star cuisine and accommodations with classic coaches that feature mahogany paneling, brass fixtures, and teak pillars. Among its seventy scenic excursions throughout Southern Africa is the thirteen-day safari-on-rails adventure from Cape Town to Dar es Salaam (July 2–14, 2004). . . . With polished wood décor, original artwork, and fresh-cut flowers, **Swan Hellenic's** new luxury liner Minerva II conveys the ambience of a relaxed country house. A 2004 highlight is its Venice-to-Barcelona "Flowering of Italian Art" cruise (July 3–17). . . . Air-rage antidote? On selected long-haul Virgin Atlantic planes, gratis E-mail and text-messaging is now available via seat-back monitors. The installation of E-mail service on all fleets is ongoing. By early 2004, **Connexion by Boeing** will provide broadband Internet service aboard British Airways, Lufthansa, Scandinavian Airlines, and Japan Airlines long-range aircraft. . . . **POINT AND CLICK >** Named the "thinnest camera ever" by the Guinness Book, the credit-card sized, quarter-inch thick **SMaL Ultra-Pocket Digital Camera** weighs 1.2 ounces and includes PC/MAC compatible and USB cable (Flight 001, $150). ▶

And lest you think Sir Terence Conran has been idle, his new **Grand Café and Bar** in the sixteenth-century Royal Exchange building comprises a Viennese-style café and a mezzanine-level bar that's all plush leather and clubby intimacy (The Courtyard Royal Exchange Bank; 020 7618 2480; conran-restaurants.co.uk).

Bond Street has reconfigured itself: In April, **Gucci** (32-33 Bond Street; 0171 629 2716; gucci.com) moved across the way into a new 7,500-square-foot space. The old store will now house **YSL Rive Gauche** for women (020 7493 1800, ysl.com). Owing its striking interior to William Russell, an **Alexander McQueen** boutique has opened in London (4-5 Old Bond Street; 020 7493 1800; alexandermcqueen.com). **Stella McCartney's** flagship (020 7518 3100; stellamccartney.com) opened its doors in May around the corner on Bruton Street. Kudos for McCartney's store go to Universal, the design studio du jour.



In Rome, two new hotels share design credentials but offer vastly different experiences. The stunning **Exedra** (Piazza della Repubblica 47; 39 06 489 381; exedra.boscolohotels.com) re-opened at the beginning of the year after a flamboyant refurbishment by Italian-American designer Adam Tihany of Le Cirque 2000 fame. Exedra's **La Frusta**, has already established its place on Rome's roster of must-try restaurants. Also designed by Tihany and not for the faint of heart is the **Aleph** (Via di San Basilio 15; 39 06 422 90; aleph.boscolohotels.com), a super-sleek boutique hotel with a "Heaven and Hell"-themed lobby and public rooms whose effect is indisputably attention-getting. The tallest building

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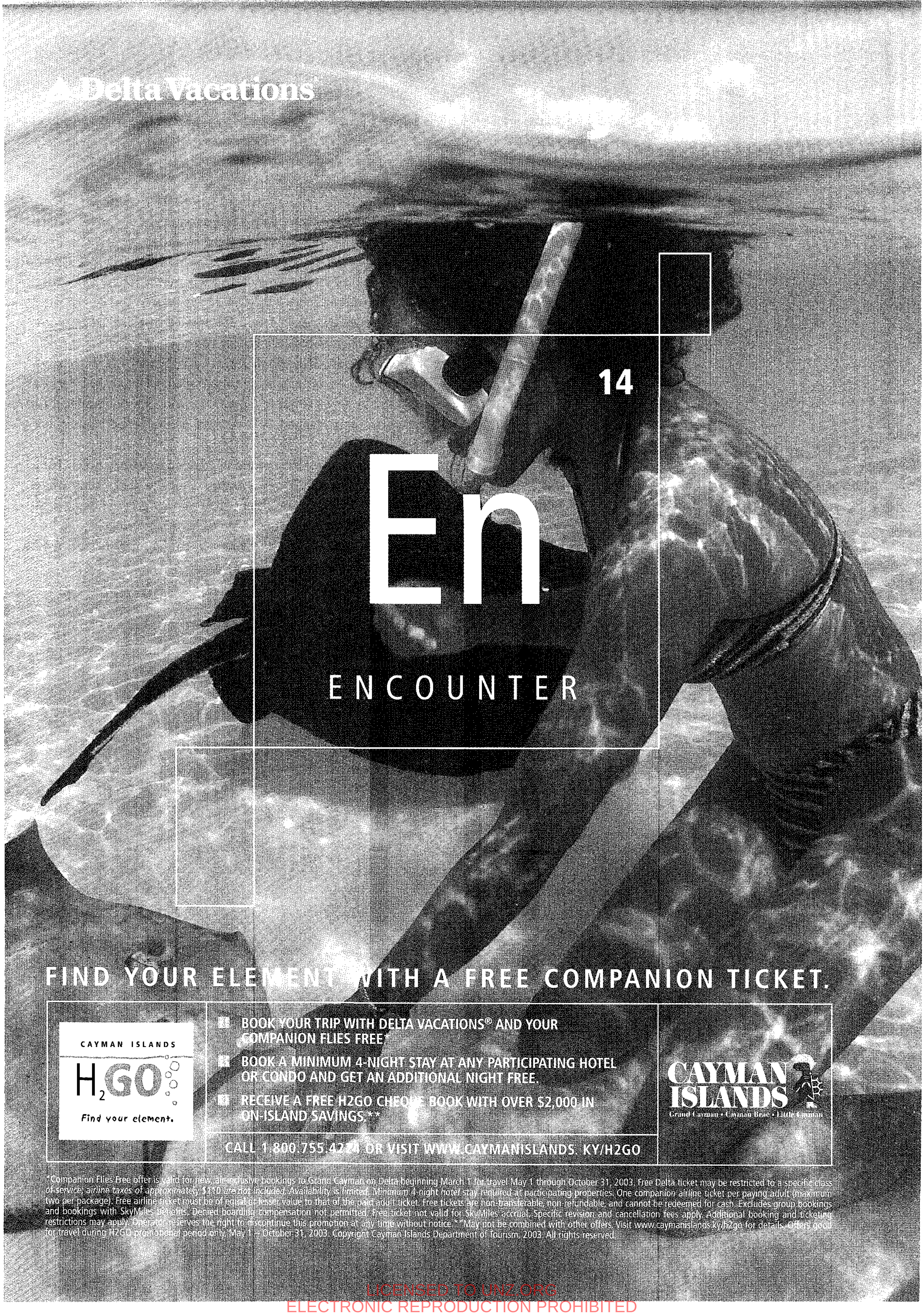
ALL ILLUSTRATIONS BY ROBERT ROTH



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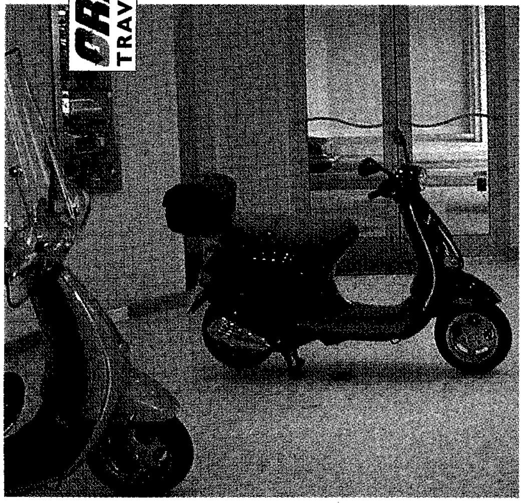


within the walls of Rome is Bettoja's first-class **Mediterraneo Hotel**. Presidential suites have terraces with flowering vines, original artwork rendered in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century style, furniture and fabrics from designer Angela Ziffer, and baths with Travatine marble.

CHIC DIGS

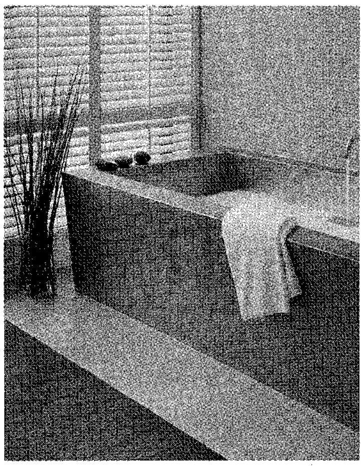
London-based Chic Retreats (chicretreats.com) with a collection of just under fifty luxury properties includes some private homes and apartments and caters to all agendas, from extreme escapism to big-city hedonism. Guests receive a membership when they book, entitling them to extra amenities and potential upgrades. Their new hotels to watch: **J. K. Place** in Florence (jkplace.hotel-firenze.net) is felicitously situated on the Piazza Santa Maria Novella, with interiors designed by Michele Bonan (the man behind Ferragamo's Lungarno hotels) and outfitted with linen sheets, art books, Louis XV fireplaces, and DVD players. In a Marrakech palm grove, **Ksar Char-Bagh** (ksarcharbagh.com) has a secluded palatial tower housing twelve sumptuous, hyper-appointed suites called *harim* (ancient Persian for apartment). **Whatley Manor** is a newly restored Cotswald manor house boasting a La Prairie spa and two gourmet restaurants manned by a veteran of the famed Manoir aux Quat'Saisons.

Closer to home, Miami's South Beach renovation of the landmark **Sagamore** hotel (1671 Collins Avenue; 800-950-1363; thompsonhotels.com) is almost complete. Its pristine white lobby doubles as one of the town's more impressive contemporary art galleries, hung with works by Massimo Vitali, Tom Lieber, Tina Deitz, and others. The hotel's final touches—a full-service spa designed by UT (the firm behind Bliss), and a private rooftop club mirroring 60 Thompson's Above 60 in New York—will be completed later in the year.

From owner Nicola Siervo of the endlessly popular Mynt comes restaurant/nightspot **Metro Kitchen + Bar** in the Hotel Astor (956 Washington Avenue; 305-672-7217), where the glass-enclosed central atrium is the place to while away a few hours celeb spotting.

Shoppers gape upon entering haute-couture designer **Roberto Cavalli's** surreal, hangar-like boutique in Coral Gables' Village of Merrick Park (305-529-2226; robertocavalli.net). It's the work of iconic Italian architect Italo Rota. The 3,800-square-foot **Vespa** store down the road (305-774-5676) is a high-gloss, white-on-white paean to perhaps the world's coolest fashion accessory.

Just across San Francisco's Geary Street



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INSIDE INFORMATION

INSIDER BOOKING ▶ For style mavens in transit, Cathy Newman's smartly illustrated **"Fashion"** (National Geographic Books), out in paperback this month, explores the historical and cultural significance of clothing and adornment. Strikingly sophisticated color photography distinguishes **"StyleCity,"** a new series of hip, insider travel guides by publisher Harry N. Abrams. The first two editions train lenses on London and Paris; New York and Barcelona are due in two months. . . . **HOMES AWAY FROM HOME >** Ninety minutes south of Cancun on the Riviera Maya, all-inclusive **Aventura Spa Palace** entices with more than six-hundred feet of white sandy beach, turquoise sea coves, tropical gardens, top-drawer spa treatments, and distinctive Mexican hacienda-style architecture—archways, vaulted ceilings, colonial fountains, handcrafted furniture, and natural tile floors. . . . A few steps from Turks and Caicos's best snorkeling reefs, the stylishly elegant **Turks & Caicos Club** is set on a gated two-acre parcel on the west end of the island of Providenciales. Four-poster beds, on-call masseuses, complimentary water sports, and a host of relaxing amenities await. . . . **Cross-Cultures'** holiday tour, Joyeüx Noel: Christmas in Provence (December 19–27), will be home based at **Hôtel d'Europe in Avignon**. A noble manse built in 1580 for the Marquess of Graveson, the hotel is renowned for its gourmet Provençal

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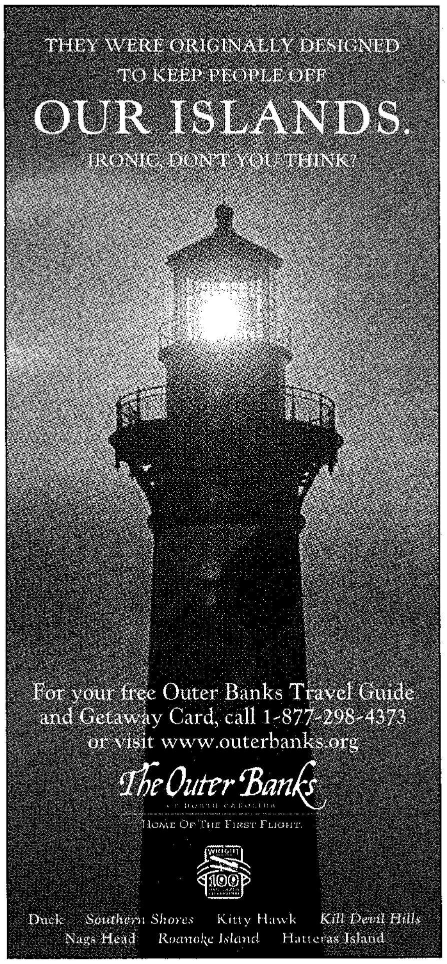
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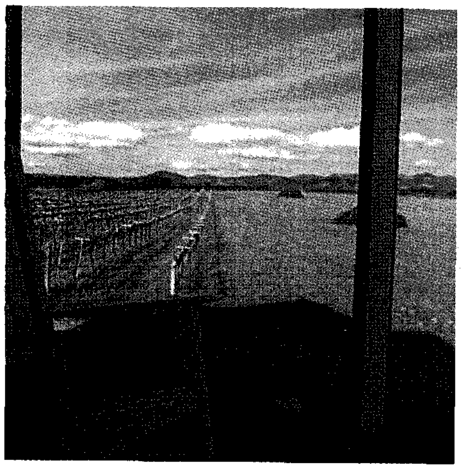
from Ian Schrager's Clift, is the new **Hotel Adagio** (550 Geary Street; 415-775-5000; thehoteladagio.com). Housed in a 1929 Spanish Colonial landmark, the integrity of which has been wisely preserved, the Adagio's rooms combine high style with homey touches like local ceramics and textiles. The sixteenth-floor suites enjoy panoramic views of downtown and the Bay, some from vast terraces. The hotel's restaurant, **Cortez**, opens this month under the aegis of Pascal Rigo, whose Chez Nous and La Table are favorites of local gourmands.

WINE-COUNTRY HOSPITALITY

Northern California lays claim to two resources that entice visitors to return again and again: an abundance of wine and cuisine that's both home-grown and world-class, and some of the country's most breathtaking scenery. Set among bucolic vineyards between Napa and Sonoma valleys, the **Carneros Inn** (707-299-4900; restaurant, La Vieille Fontaine, and for its antique and Aubusson tapestry-adorned rooms. . . . More expansive than many villas, the lavish Empire Suites (up to 5,400 square feet) at **The Waldorf Towers** in midtown Manhattan feature marble foyers, dining rooms fit for banquets, and spacious kitchens with service entrances. Brand new at the Towers is the **+ One Spa** with Asian-style décor and signature treatments such as the Duke and Duchess Suite Retreat. . . . **SITE SEEING >** Roam the halls of Andrew Carnegie's historic sixty-four-room New York mansion—home of the **Cooper-Hewitt National Design Museum.** "Inside Design Now" *(through January 25th) displays the works of eighty* designers and firms, including architects Escher + GuneWardena and Peter Eisenman, as well as fashionistas Tess Giberson and Isabel Toledo. ▲



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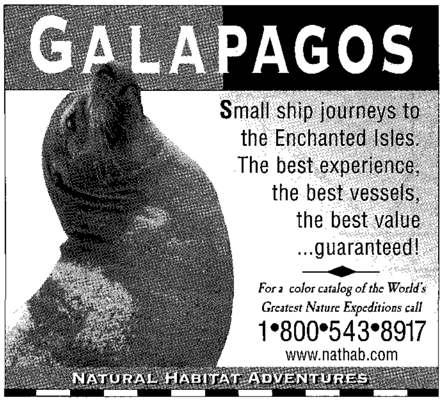

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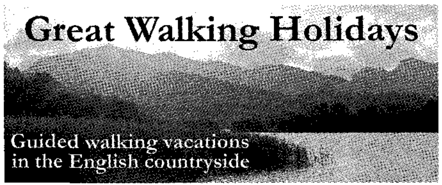

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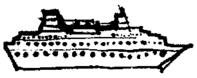
Due east in the town of Napa is **Angèle** (540 Main Street; 707-252-8115; angele.us) opened last December by the Rouas family, founders of the world-famous Auberge du Soleil. Executive chef Christophe Gérard's resume includes sojourns at Taillevent in Paris and L'Espinasse in New York, and they show in his menu, staunchly and pleasingly Gallic.

An hour north of San Francisco, the **Hotel Healdsburg** (25 Matheson Street, Healdsburg; 707-431-2800; hotelhealdsburg.com) has amenities to thrill your inner sybarite and décor to satisfy your inner Zen monk. On the premises, Charlie Palmer's **Dry Creek Kitchen** (707-431-0330) features dishes highlighting local ingredients, down to the olive oil in your vinaigrette. Likewise the wine list specializes in Sonoma bottlings. And if you fail to secure a table in Yountville's illustrious French Laundry, take heart: **Bouchon** (6534 Washington Street; 707-944-8037), Thomas Keller's second business venture there, serves a lighter, modern take on bistro fare in a more casual setting.

IT'S ALL IN THE DETAILS

Crystal Cruises's selective liaising with some of the most recognized names in haute cuisine has set new standards for the cruise-line industry imbuing it with timely caché. The most recent addition to its fleet, Crystal Serenity, which officially entered service on July 7th, features two restaurants—The Sushi Bar and Silk Road from Nobu Matsuhisa. (The acclaimed chef designed the menus and trained the chefs.) Suzanne Goin of LA's Lucques will be on board Serenity as part of the ship's Wine & Food Festival this year, as will oenophiles like Kevin Zraly, author of "The One Hour Wine Expert." Serenity's ports of call for 2003–04 range from points in the Caribbean to the Mediterranean. She arrives in Fort Lauderdale from Lisbon on November 17th (800-804-1500; crystalcruises.com).



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ISLAND STYLE: CREATURE COMFORTS

The Cayman Islands are among the few delightfully underdeveloped places remaining in the Caribbean. The lack of crowds shouldn't be equated with a lack of enticing destinations for luxurious unwinding, however. One of the region's top resorts, **The Westin Casuarina** (888-625-5144; westin.com), recently unveiled its Hibiscus Spa, a center for total mind-body-spirit rejuvenation, whose list of indulgences includes his and hers massages, customized facials utilizing the revered YonKa skincare line, and chakra therapy. On Little Cayman, the smallest and quietest of the Cayman Islands, the ten-room **Southern Cross Club** (800-899-2582; southerncrossclub.com) is consistently rated one of the premier dive resorts in the world. But private oceanfront villas, gourmet meals, and the island's prettiest beach keep landlubbing guests more than satisfied, too. Fishing and some incredible bird and iguana watching are not to be missed (rock iguanas far outnumber people here). Coming to Grand Cayman in late 2004, **The Ritz-Carlton** (800-241-3333; ritz-carlton.com) will open on Seven Mile Beach with a nine-hole golf course designed by Greg Norman and what promises to be the island's largest spa.

(New York-based writer Maria Shollenbarger has contributed to Interior Design, One, Time Out, Marie Claire, *and* Print *magazines.)*

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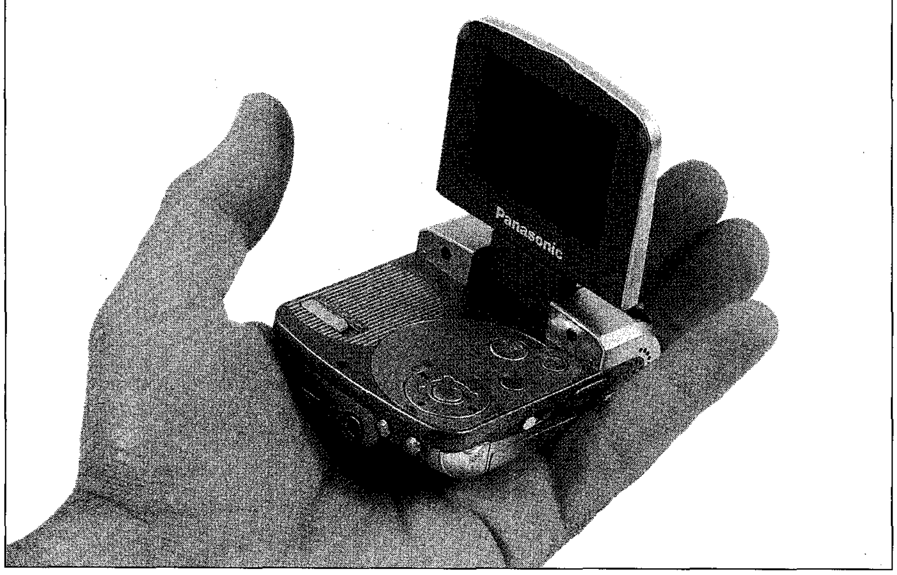

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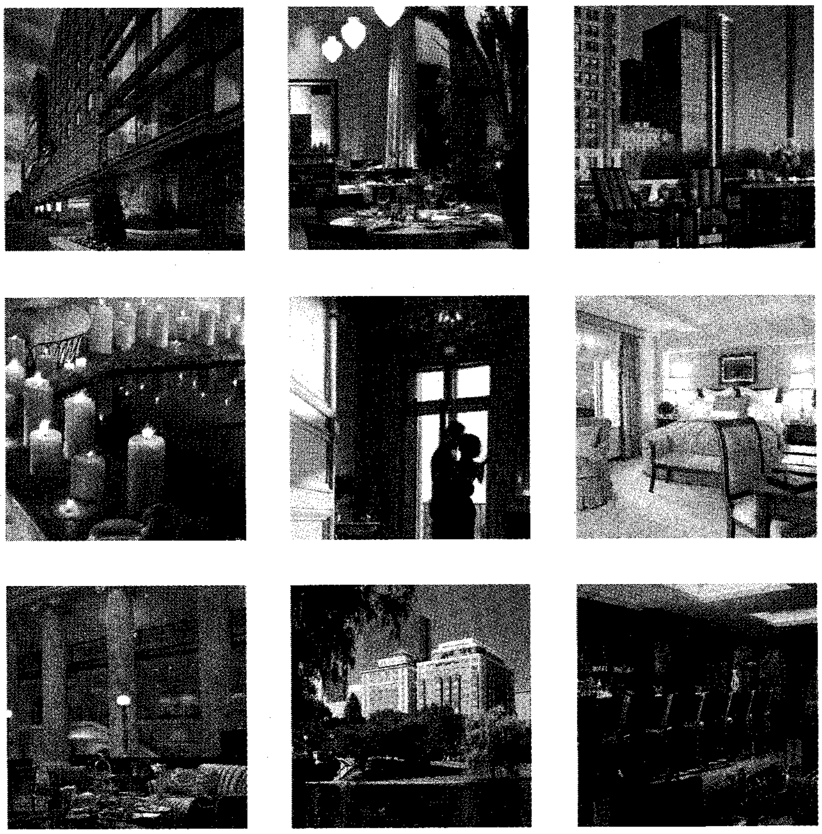

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and had acquired a dusky cast that worried him.

Eventually, the nurse instructed him to fill out a form, which he did with growing awareness of the pain. Then she said, "I'll take you to your room. You'll be spending the night." She turned, and Briggs followed her down a brown corridor with the usual antiseptic smell and rolling stainless-steel tables. She left him in the room. He propped one foot on the toe of the other to alleviate the rhythmic ache and found himself perspiring. He reached for the remote control, turned the TV on, and then turned it off immediately. A few minutes later, Olivia entered in a nurse's uniform. "Let's get rid of those pants," she said.

As Briggs lay in his shorts, Olivia bent close over the wound and studied it in silence. "Right back," she said, and left the room. When she returned a few minutes later, she had a metal tray, from which she extracted a syringe. "I don't like this stuff," she said, "but the poison has spread and we've got to use it. It will help with the pain. We're talking pronto." Briggs had planned a conversation designed to break this mystery, but Olivia was leaning over him, studying his eyes as she pressed the hypodermic into him, when here came the enveloping wave and he was overcome. "Feels so good," she said quietly. "Doesn't it?" He nodded slowly, infinitely grateful for the bite of the rattlesnake. She held his face in her hands and gazed at him as he went under. "I just know it feels *so* good."

When he awoke the next morning, he doubted everything he remembered. He checked his leg to see if he'd been bitten by a snake, and thank God he had. He noticed that the pain was gone. He rang the call button next to his bed. A nurse entered, a tall, peevish woman of fifty, carrying a copy of *Field & Stream.*

"I'm better, and I'm going home."

"Doctor will decide when you can go."

Because Briggs's impatience was growing, it was a blessing that the doctor came soon. Close to retirement age, he was a well-groomed, silver-haired man, exceedingly thin, in polished walking shoes, cuffed serge pants, and a sparkling white smock.

"How do you feel?"

"I feel fine, ready to go home. I suppose the nurse is off today?"

"What nurse?"

"The one who treated me last night."

"I treated you last night. You were sound asleep, like you'd passed out. In any case, I couldn't wake you. I went ahead and did what I thought best. I gave you a good slug of antivenin."

"I clearly remember a woman, coming and treating me."

"I hope she was pretty. It was a dream."

"Let me ask you something—is Dr. Halliday on duty today?"

The doctor looked startled and a little evasive. He said, "Dr. Halliday lost his license to practice long ago. Of course, we feel terrible about it. His daughter has stayed with us, and we hope that's some help in a very regrettable situation."

Briggs left the hospital in the same dirty clothes he'd worn to paint and clean his yard. He drove home, parked by the woodpile, and killed the snake with a hoe, then went up to the house to read his mail and check his phone messages. He felt an incongruous sadness over killing the snake, which had tried in vain to get away. The refrigerator was still well stocked, and he started a pot of spicy vegetable soup. He smelled mothballs and remembered the blankets he'd put in storage the day before.

On Wednesday, he took three shirts and a sports jacket to be dry-cleaned. He usually went to Arnold's, where he had an account, but it was closed on Wednesdays, so he drove a few extra miles and carried his things into Bright's. The smell of cleaning fluid was a little stronger in Bright's, and he wondered if that meant that they were more thorough or just harsher on the clothes. To the left of the long counter was a revolving circular rack, which ran electrically, and was now being operated by a broad woman with her back to him. She said, "Be just a sec," as she compared a slip in her hand with the several tags on the clothes that revolved before her. She found what she was looking for, a tuxedo, and took it down to hang on a rack next to the cash register, then turned to Briggs: it was her, the woman who had accosted him at the farmers' market. She recognized him first and covered her mouth with her hands. "I wondered if I'd see you again. I so have to apologize to you! I completely and utterly thought you were someone else."

"Don't give it a thought," Briggs said

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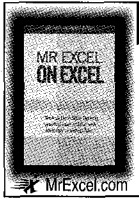

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"Do you ever stop to think about the nepotism issues I've spared you?"

• •

with reserve. He added, "I gather you thought that a number of other people were someone else."

This puzzled her. "No, just you."

"I was led to think otherwise. It's my turn to apologize."

"Can we call it even Stephen?"

He hoped that he'd have a chance to speak to Olivia about this. So, later in the fall, when he received an invitation to her wedding, his first thought was "Of course I'll go."

In the receiving line, Olivia hung around the neck of her new husband, a glass of champagne in her hand, jubilant and tipsy. The wedding party was clamorous, gathered under the old trees behind the house with red shutters. The groom was a specimen of tidy manhood, with black, tightly clipped hair, blue eyes, and ears like little seashells; he wore a perfectly tailored dark summer suit and a colorful tie that spelled out the word "Montana"—not the state but Claude, the French couturier. Briggs wondered if he was wrong in thinking that the groom wore eyeliner. Olivia touched the champagne glass to the tip of her nose and giggled when Briggs appeared. He knew right away that he wouldn't be able to ask his questions. He pumped the groom's hand and wished them all the luck in the world. He meant it, even though he felt the same queer longing on seeing Olivia. It was her husband's turn to go for a ride.

During the ceremony, rain clouds had grumbled overhead and now the shower began. The wedding party rushed to the house with hilarity, and Briggs decided that this would be a good time for him to leave, but Olivia detained him, resting her outspread fingers on his shirt while the rain fell on them both. She was remarkably heedless in her beautiful wedding gown, and Briggs caught sight of the husband's face in the hall window. "You were so good to me that time and so patient with my father," she said.

"Where is your father?"

"We got him out of here." She was close to him as she spoke. He felt her breath on his face and his heart was racing. "I'm glad I had the chance to . . ." She smiled. "To give you a lift when you were in the hospital."

The rain redoubled, sweeping down through the canopy of leaves, and they fled to the house, Olivia disappearing into the happy crowd. Briggs didn't know quite what to do with himself. He made his way back to the kitchen where he'd dined with Dr. Halliday. It was empty. He went to the sink and ran the tap until the water was cold, filled a glass, and drank it down. The pandemonium outside elevated for an instant as the kitchen door opened behind him. When he put the glass down and turned around, he was looking into the face of the groom, aggressively close to his own. He stared at Briggs in silence. "I hope you understand that you will never put your nasty hands on her again," he said. "Get over it."

Briggs looked at this handsome, well-cared-for man. "It will be hard to give up," he said.

"But you will, won't you?"

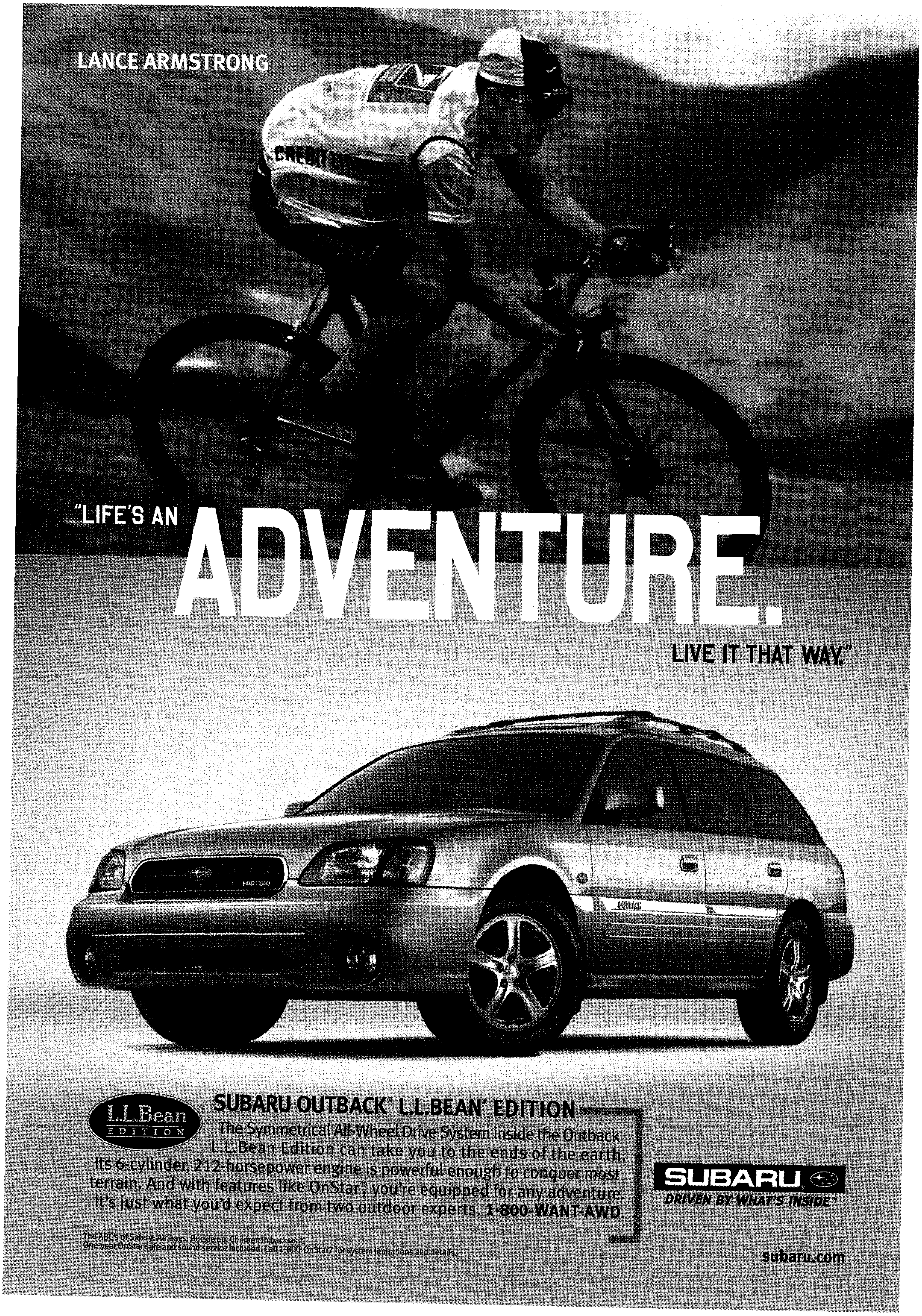
"I suppose. It was so intense. The last time, in my car, the air bags deployed. But, yes, you have my word."

The groom reached out his hand and Briggs took it. The hand was so clammy that Briggs had an instant of sympathy. In the groom's face nothing changed.

"Have we got a deal?" the groom asked, and Briggs pretended to agonize over the decision. He let the conflicts play themselves out on his face before heaving a great sigh.

"We've got a deal," he said, his voice resigned. As they strolled back to the party together, Briggs decided that spicing things up in this way was absolutely the last favor he would do for Olivia. He watched the groom go to her and whisper in her ear. Olivia looked over at Briggs, smiled at him sadly, he thought, and waved. Hello? Goodbye? He wasn't sure.

The rain had stopped, and something caused the wedding crowd to gravitate toward the stately elm shading the lawn, its leaves just starting to change color. Briggs followed until he was part of the half-circle of celebrants facing Olivia, who stood on a small dais, placed there, he supposed, for this purpose. "I'd like to propose a toast!" she called out in a voice that carried remarkably. He barely heard her words, but stared, spellbound, at her wide, confident smile, the steady movement of her head as she took in all the wedding guests, and the hand gestures that would have been clear from the nearby mountains. Her voice rang out expressively, each syllable occupying its own time and space. At the end of the toast, she clasped her hands to her chest, bowed modestly to the admiring applause, and, without looking, reached out a regal hand to her new husband. ♦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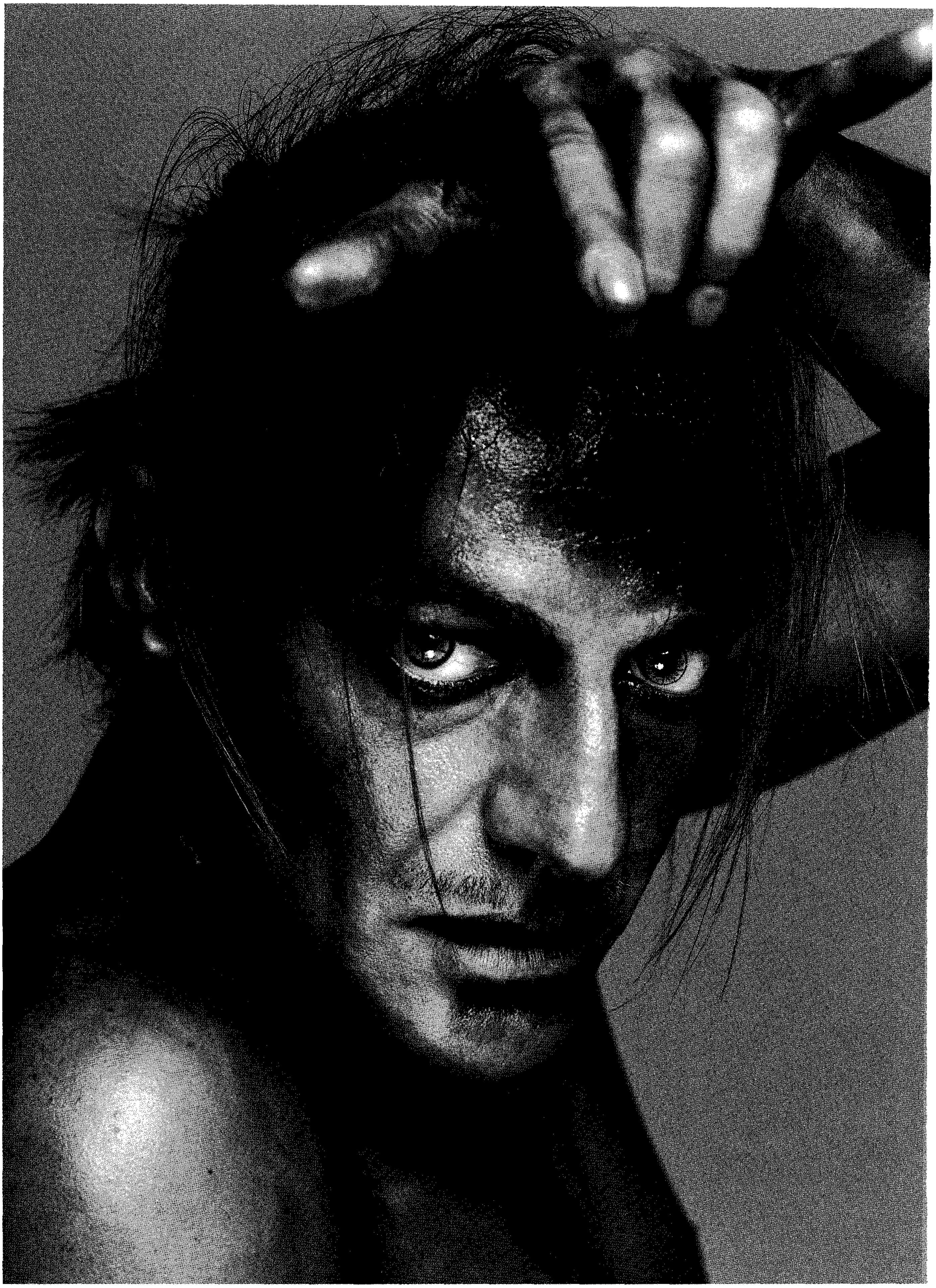
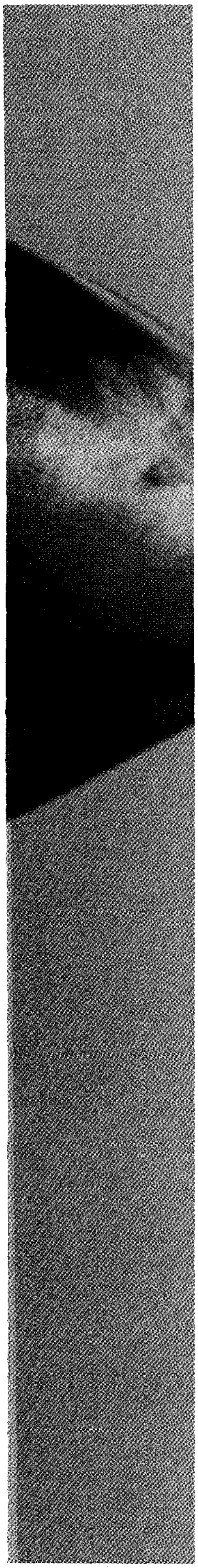




THE FANTASIST

How John Galliano reimagined fashion.

BY MICHAEL SPECTER

Last July, three hours before the first model—wearing a flamenco skirt flecked with purple polka dots and cut from more than a hundred and fifty metres of crinoline, organza, and georgette crêpe—stepped onto the runway at the Christian Dior haute-couture show, held in the Hippodrome d'Auteuil, John Galliano, the House of Dior's forty-two-year-old design director, settled anxiously into a tiny, makeshift dressing room directly behind the stage. Show days are tense for any fashion designer—a season's worth of sales can ride on the result—but Galliano had more on his mind than clothing. He was keeping a secret from hundreds of his employees at Dior, from scores of fashion writers who had just arrived in Paris, even from many of his closest friends: three days earlier, Galliano's father had died, and, at exactly the moment that his presence in the Dior atelier, on the Avenue Montaigne, was considered essential, Galliano had flown to Gibraltar to bury him.

Galliano is often described as a blatant exhibitionist; he also happens to be shy. He didn't want people to know about his father's death, because he didn't want them to be distracted from the preparations for the show. Fewer than a dozen people knew where he had gone. He disappeared and returned to Paris two days later, on a jet lent to him by Bernard Arnault, his boss, who is the chairman of L.V.M.H., France's largest luxury-goods company. Galliano then worked through the night, fitting models and making final adjustments to their clothes. By the time he reached his dressing room, he looked numb. Still, Galliano is a man who believes deeply that appearances matter, and he had refused to alter his normal routine: just after dawn on the day of the show, he jogged three miles to his gym, where his exercise program includes hundreds of sit-ups and frequent boxing matches. Even he acknowledges that he has an almost demonic desire to perfect his body. "I am a completely obsessive man, and that comes out more clearly in times of stress," Galliano told me before the show. "Whatever I do, I like to do it until it can't be done anymore. It doesn't matter if it's work or the gym or some things I might not even want to mention."

Galliano arrived in Paris in 1990, a nearly destitute punk with unmistakable talent and an unrivalled reputation for personal excess. At the time, many designers were operating under the influence of Japanese-inspired minimalism. The eighties were over and the era of the pouffe was out of vogue. The models, often wearing subtly tailored black clothing, would walk quietly down the runway under dim lights. They would twirl and walk back to the stage, and that would be the show. Galliano was appalled. He thinks about fashion shows the way Steven Spielberg thinks about movies; he believes in spectacle, complication, suspense. "I met John in 1984 at the show he put on to graduate from art school in London," Jeremy Healy, a well-known d.j. who is among Galliano's closest friends, told me. "My girlfriend was modelling, and when she walked down the runway she had a tree branch coming out of her head and she was waving a dead mackerel. An actual dead fish. The whole show was like that. It takes a lot to shock me. But I just thought, What the hell is this bloke up to?" The graduation show was a suc-

PHOTOGRAPH BY RICHARD AVEDON

Galliano in New York. "I just think every woman deserves to be desired," he says. "Is that really asking too much?"

cess, and it convinced Galliano that the bizarre—and even the infamous—sells. Since then, he has never wavered; in the past decade, he has sent trapeze artists, sailor boys, and naughty schoolgirls down the runway, not to mention nuns in bondage and even a version of homeless tramps.

Galliano has staged fashion shows at the Paris Opéra and at the Gare d'Austerlitz, where he hired an antique steam train to ferry the models about the platform, which he turned into a North African souk, with more than a score of half-naked men serving mint tea and a floor covered with imported rust-colored sand. Last fall, inspired by a trip to China, Galliano flew a dozen Shaolin monks to Paris, and sent them thundering down the catwalk twirling swords and swinging numchucks. He also imported a troupe of Chinese acrobats who, positioned at the stage entrance, spun plates on foot-long sticks. There was even a girl in a pink tutu riding a bicycle on top of a parasol carried by a Chinese elder. In the *International Herald Tribune*, Suzy Menkes called it "the most staggering example of self-indulgent luxury since Louis XIV held court at Versailles"—where, by the way, Galliano had presented Dior's previous winter collection.

Galliano alters his look for each show, and he cares at least as much about his own appearance as he does about those of Nicole Kidman and Gwen Stefani, both of whom he often dresses. The morning of this summer's haute-couture show, Galliano put on a pair of carefully distressed bluejeans with perfectly frayed cuffs—which covered his sandals but not the toenails he had recently painted a glossy shade that he calls "cosmic blue." Galliano's personal hair-and-makeup team had been briefed in advance on the look he wanted to achieve, which was inspired by the evolution of dance. "I am feeling very Spanish tango dirty creepy with oily black hair," he said. His stylist got the message: he glued a stringy goatee onto Galliano's chin and trimmed it to a neat triangle; after that, he spent half an hour curling Galliano's hair and then applied a thick coat of mascara to the lashes beneath his dark-brown eyes. Galliano wore hoop earrings. His muscles were oiled, then covered by a layer of grime—so that he would look like a toreador when he took his victory lap. (Most designers simply dart onto the runway at the end of a show; a few take a quick stroll in the company of the models. Galliano struts the catwalk all by himself, and he does it with the hauteur of Naomi Campbell.)

By the time guests started filing into the tent, however, Galliano looked weary and depressed. His father was a plumber, a quiet, stern man who labored for years in one of South London's dingiest precincts before retiring and moving, with Galliano's mother, to Spain. Many things had been left unsaid between the two men—among them that Galliano is gay. ("It was all very Latin and complicated between me and my father," he told me.) Galliano paced on a zebra-skin rug that had been sent from his atelier. Two six-by-eight-foot blowups of the model Angela Lindvall, glistening and full of desire, dominated the little room.

"This day is going to be hard," Galliano said. "But I can deal with that later. Right now, I need to focus on the show. I want people to forget about their electricity bills, their jobs, everything. It's

NORTH OF MANHATTAN

You can take the Dyre Avenue bus to where the subway terminates
just inside the Bronx
and be downtown before you realize
how quickly your body has escaped your mind,
stretching down the tracks on a beam
until the band snaps and the body slips free and is gone,
out the crashing doors, through the stiles,
and up the long chutes,
to burn both ways at once down the avenues,
ecstatic in its finitude,
with all the other bodies,
the bundles of molecules
fusing and dispersing on the sidewalks.
Ten to the hundredth power,
bundles of molecules are looking at paintings,
bundles of molecules are eating corn muffins,
crab cakes, shad roe, spring lamb, rice pudding.
Bundles of molecules are talking to each other,
sotto voce or in a commanding voice—
"I agree with you one hundred per cent, Dog";
"I looked for you today, but you'd already gone";
"I've left the Amended Restated Sublease Agreement on your desk";
"I'm going home now,
and you think about what you did."
The ear grows accustomed to wider and wider intervals.
The eye senses shapes in the periphery
toward which it dares not turn to look.
One bundle is selling another a playback machine,
a six-square-inch wax-paper reticule
of powdered white rhinoceros horn,
an off-season-discounted ticket to Machu Picchu,
a gas-powered generator
for when the lights go out,
a dime bag of Mexican brown.
It is four o'clock in the afternoon.
The sunlight is stealing inch by inch
down the newly repointed red brick wall.
She comes into the kitchen wrapped in the quilt

and watches as he fries eggs.
"After what just happened, you want to eat?" she says in disgust.
Will she or will she not, back in the bedroom,
lift the gun from the holster
and put it in her purse? The mind, meanwhile,
is still somewhere around Tremont Avenue,
panting down the tracks, straining
from the past to the vanishing present.
It will never catch up
and touch the moment. It will always be
in this tunnel of its forever,
where aquamarine crusted bulbs feed on a darkness
that looks all around without seeing,
and fungus, earlike, starved for light, sprouts
from walls where drops of rusted water
condense and drip.

Don't say I didn't warn you about this.
Don't say my concern for your welfare
never extended to my sharing the terrible and addictive secrets
that only death can undo.
Because I'm telling you now
that you can also take the same bus north,
crossing over against the traffic spilling out of the mall
and waiting twenty minutes in the kiosk with the Drambuie ad.
There. Isn't that better?
More passengers are getting off than on.
The girl with the skates going home from practice
will soon get off, as will
the old woman whose license to drive has been taken from her.
They will enter houses with little gazebos tucked in their gardens.
And then, for just a while, the mind will disembark from the body,
relaxed on its contoured plastic seat,
and go out to make fresh tracks in the snow
and stand and breathe under the imaginary trees—
the horsehair pine, the ambergris tree,
the tree that the bulbul loves,
the nebula tree . . .

—*Vijay Seshadri*

fantasy time. My goal is really very simple: when a man looks at a woman wearing one of my dresses, I would like him basically to be saying to himself, 'I have to fuck her.' " He shrugged his shoulders. "I just think every woman deserves to be desired. Is that really asking too much?"

When John Galliano began showing collections in Paris, at the age of thirty, he was already considered to possess one of Britain's most original, if outrageous, fashion minds. Three years earlier, he had been named Designer of the Year in England. (He has since won the award three more times—the only person ever to do so.) Critics often dismissed Galliano as a sort of dressmaking Barnum: his clothes were exquisite, but he was too much the showman—and his outfits often seemed more suited to the pageantry of public relations than to profits. Yet his effect on the way women dress is almost impossible to overstate, and it became apparent as soon as he graduated from St. Martin's School of Art, in 1984. More than any other designer working today, Galliano is responsible for the sheer and sexually frank clothing so many women wear. "You cannot name many people who completely change fashion, and John is one of them," André Leon Talley, *Vogue's* editor-at-large, told me. Talley is the person who Galliano says is most responsible for bringing his work to a larger public. "The sexy slip dress, the spaghetti straps, everything inspired by lingerie and by the curves of a woman's body—that is all John," Talley said. Others agree. "John is really the reference point for the rest of us," one of his competitors, the designer Diane von Furstenberg, told me. "Because we are making clothes, and he is making magic."

In the mid-nineties, Bernard Arnault, who oversees the L.V.M.H. conglomerate's luxury holdings—Louis Vuitton, Moët, and Hennessy—along with Christian Dior and other companies, decided that the group needed to attract younger shoppers who were more adventurous than their mothers. Among Arnault's properties was the couture house founded by Hubert de Givenchy in 1952. Givenchy had a talent for creating clothes that made a woman look innocent and sexy at the same time, but in recent years the look had come to be viewed as prissy and dated. Arnault wanted somebody to pull the house into the modern era, and Galliano was everything that the understated and deliberate Marquis de Givenchy was not.

When Arnault actually gave Galliano Givenchy's job, late in 1995, many people were shocked (including the sixty-eight-year-old Givenchy himself, who learned about the appointment when he read it in a news release issued by his own press office). Galliano became the first British designer to take over a major French fashion house in nearly a century and a half—since Charles Frederick Worth was appointed by Napoleon III to dress the Empress Eugénie. It would have been difficult under any circumstances for the staid French fashion establishment to accept the appointment of a foreigner to run a firm whose refined image was represented most famously by Audrey Hepburn. But John Galliano? A flamboyant South London night-club habitué who looked like a buccaneer, with his bandannas, pencil mustache, and shoulder-length hair? "When John went to Givenchy, he cre-

"I'm through with apparel. From now on, it's just accessories."

ated more 'wow' than any other designer in Paris at that time," Joseph Boitano, a senior vice-president at Saks, told me. "He still does. But people were not ready for him yet. There was a lot of surprise."

In Europe, fashion is a blood sport, and the Parisian lunching class couldn't get enough of the Givenchy saga. French critics used the word "capitulation," and implied that Arnault's choice was a sure sign of the nation's cultural decline. The comments of the couturier Valentino were typical: "He has a wonderful imagination, but I am not sure that technically he knows everything about how to make a dress." Within a month of arriving at Givenchy, however, Galliano astonished seamstresses by returning several sample dresses along with written instructions on how to improve them so that they fit in a less dowdy way: "Tighter, smaller, tighter, smaller, tighter, smaller," his note said in its entirety. "The place was a bit of a dowager when I arrived," he told me, "and I felt that you didn't really need to get trussed up to look great anymore. I wanted to free women from wearing corsets and big taffeta skirts."

Throughout the next year, Galliano was covered in the press as if he were a war. Reporters would appear constantly at his parents' home in Streatham. They followed his slightly mystified father to work and asked his mother countless questions that she had no desire to answer. ("I got so sick of seeing my father called a plumber in every article," Galliano recalled not long before his father died. "People are always talking about how I am a plumber's son. I am my father's son primarily. What he chose to do as a career was his choice and he did it very, very well.") The French papers reported regularly, and somewhat gleefully, that Galliano's departure was imminent. Arnault was forced regularly to announce that it was not. Eventually, though, Galliano's technical skill became apparent even to those who did not like the results. He had, by the time he arrived in Paris, mastered the art of cutting dresses along the bias—against the grain rather than on seams—so that a garment would move more easily and that a woman's curves would be revealed and not concealed. It is a difficult technique, because, as Galliano puts it, the dress must become "like oily water running through your fingers."

The beleaguered French fashion élite had only begun to recover from the shock of Galliano's ascent, when, in 1996, Arnault moved him to the House of Dior—which, along with Chanel, is the best-known and most highly regarded fashion brand. Galliano had never held a regular job for any length of time before he went to Givenchy; now he would have to supervise nearly a thousand employees and oversee multimillion-dollar marketing campaigns, and do it all, dauntingly, in the atelier created by one of his heroes, Christian Dior.

Certainly, no single event had more impact on the way women dressed in the twentieth century than the introduction, by Dior in 1947, of the New Look, which featured opulent, romantic clothes whose rounded shoulders and tightly cinched waists seemed risqué and ebullient to a country just emerging from the devastation of the Second World War. "Dior has done for Paris couture what the taxi drivers did for France at the Battle of the Marne," one fashion writer said at the time. Instantly, the firm became a touchstone of French quality and finesse. By 1949, Dior accounted for seventy-five per cent of the Parisian clothes worn by foreigners and five per cent of France's over-all exports. Arnault, in selecting Galliano, had handed a national treasure to an outsider. "You cannot imagine how shocking it was to appoint him—this was *Dior*, for heaven's sake, *Dior*," André Leon Talley said to me one day, his voice rising sharply each time he uttered the word "Dior." "Can you imagine? A young radical British punk at the firm that represented the arch-tradition of French luxury."

For a while, Galliano struggled with his legacy, but within a year the company was making money again and his transformation was complete: in less than a decade, Galliano had gone from sleeping on the floors of his friends' apartments to a life as the emperor of the most successful fashion house in the world. Although neither Dior nor he will reveal his salary, he earns millions of dollars a year, more in a month than his father earned in his life. It has been a perilous time for the fashion industry; sales have fallen, many companies have cut back, and some have closed. But at Christian Dior Couture, which includes the ready-to-wear accessories business, sales rose forty-one per cent last year, to $535.6 million. The company reported profits of thirty-six million dollars, up sharply from 2001, and projects sales of as much as a billion dollars by 2006. "John Galliano will certainly figure as one of the greatest designers of his time," Arnault has said. "Through his work at Dior, he has been able to bring modernity to the ultimate luxury house and to envision the fashion of the third millennium."

Galliano actually has two jobs. In addition to Dior, he produces his own line of clothing, and this year he opened his first boutique—a nearly two-thousand-square-foot space, on the Rue Saint-Honoré, which cost millions of dollars to renovate—and he has plans for boutiques in London, New York, and Tokyo. Galliano's first dress for Dior was a lingerie-inspired slip created for the Princess of Wales, who wore it as the guest of honor at a dinner given at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in December, 1996. Since then, his clothes have been coveted and hoarded both by celebrities and by women who have never even met a famous person. The delicately embroidered gold-and-green shift that Galliano made for Nicole Kidman for the 1997 Academy Awards assured her a role among Hollywood's most stylish women. Galliano's Dior saddlebag, now sold in shops from Hong Kong to Houston, has helped the company earn millions. Two years ago, he was called to Buckingham Palace, where the Queen awarded him the C.B.E. for his service to Great Britain.

Galliano doesn't delegate easily, but neither did Dior. "A Frenchman we'd never heard about till seven years ago is worshiped as a dictator of fashion by every Eve whose fig leaf proved inadequate," an article in the *Saturday Evening Post* declared in 1953. Dior would laugh about his role but said of the women he dressed, without irony, "My dream is to save them from nature." Galliano shares the view. "I am a hopeless romantic, and I want to make women feel sexy and beautiful." He runs the company almost as single-mindedly as Dior himself did: he oversees not only the clothes and the advertising campaigns but the many licenses—bags, shoes, Baby Dior, underwear, eyewear, perfumes, and swimwear. Galliano even designed the hangers in his boutique, and decided how many layers of paint should be applied to the industrial-steel beams that hold the building together. Visiting the boutique one day, I watched as Galliano checked nearly every dress to make certain it was hanging in the right way and in the right place. He even ducked into the bathroom (which has quilted, embroidered walls) and the dressing room (whose floors are covered in calfskin) to make certain that his newest product, the Galliano Diptyque candle, was burning properly.

Galliano has developed a predatory eye for the bottom line. His own label, which had no more than a dozen retail outlets in the world when he was appointed to Dior, now has hundreds, and Valérie Hermann, the president of Galliano, projects that sales will grow by as much as twenty-five per cent this year. Galliano has also just introduced a line of men's clothing—a typical blend of the bizarre and the conservative, with suit sleeves that close not with buttons but with the type of hooks and eyes found on bras. And his ambition is anything but sated. I once asked if he could see himself designing furniture or cars, or even houses. "Yes," he replied instantly. "Yes to all of it. I would never put a limit on my goals. I would love to see what a John Galliano airplane would look like, or a hotel. I don't want ever to say there is something that John Galliano won't do."

One overcast morning in late June, I walked to the eighteenth-century building where Galliano lives with his boyfriend and their Jack Russell terrier. It is just a few blocks from the Picasso Museum, in the Marais, one of the oldest parts of Paris. Most Parisians were still in bed, but Galliano's driver was stationed out front and so was Frédéric Vaché, one of Galliano's two physical trainers. (Whether he is travelling in India, China, Russia, or the South of France, he is never without one of them. He also consults a sports doctor nearly every week: "He keeps a chart that shows my most stressful periods. At that point, my cardiovascular work increases and my intake of protein decreases at nighttime.")

Galliano emerged from the courtyard looking carefully dishevelled but wide awake. His hair was tied back in a bun, and he wore a Russell Athletic T-shirt over shorts and sneakers. We jogged for about five kilometres through the Marais, then along the banks of the Seine, where Galliano pointed out various women whose stylish attire caught his eye.

We ran past La Samaritaine, which Arnault recently bought. Galliano pointed

"You are going to wish you had cancelled this appointment."

at a woman strolling along the Left Bank. "Look," he noted, approvingly. "She is wearing cycling clothes with a vintage Chanel top. That's *major*." ("Major" is a word Galliano uses often, always with zeal. As in "Did you see Nicole in 'The Hours'? She was major," or "Have you ever tried the steak at Lapérouse? It's major.") A bit farther along, we ran past a stunning woman, and as we did he turned his head to me and shouted, "She is so very John Galliano!" The woman, who was in her twenties, had short, spiky blond hair, and was wearing silver stiletto sandals and a brown beaded dress under what looked like a ripped black sweatshirt. Her right fist was wrapped around a two-thousand-dollar handbag. It was unclear to me whether she was on her way to the office or coming home from a very long night on the town.

Galliano often refers to things he sees on the street or at work as "very John Galliano." I asked him what that meant. "It is something incredibly refined mixed with something savage," he explained. "Savage" is another of his favorite compliments. Tribes of all kinds interest him, and he collects the Native American photographs of Edward S. Curtis. "Refined is boring and savage can be too obvious," he said. John Galliano is all about trying to strike the perfect balance between the two.

It was on a run like this that Galliano became fascinated with the people who live on the stoops near the Seine—what he calls the "wet world" and what almost everyone else on earth calls the homeless. He built his 2000 fall couture show around a concept of how they dressed. "There is this whole world of fantastic characters who live there, I believe through choice," he told me. The clothes—ripped and reconstructed—were remarkable displays of fashion technique and history, and they were supposed to reflect the inventiveness of street people. Galliano was picketed and reviled, though, for what was considered a callous attitude toward the homeless. Riot police surrounded the Dior offices, on the Avenue Montaigne, and Galliano had to apologize. "I saw just the romantic side of it, the poetic side of it," he told me. "The criticism was that I was taking the piss out of homeless people, but the point was that they are creating beauty out of necessity. I loved that collection."

We ran past Notre-Dame and up the Rue Poissonnière, where, according to Galliano, the best French knockoffs of designer goods are produced. Frédéric, the trainer, ran beside us, and every few minutes would offer annoying tips ("Your arms are too tense," "Your posture is poor," and so on). After half an hour, we arrived at our destination: Galliano's gym.

Galliano never worked out before he moved to Paris. How, I wondered, did a guy who was famous for staying out all night—and for disappearing, sometimes for days, after each of his collections was shown—become such a fitness fanatic? "I got a grownup job," he replied. "I was drinking coffee and diet sodas to give me the buzz to get through the day. At night, to come down I would open a bottle of red wine to relax. Do you know what I mean? Also my change of diet. I ate purely crap before I came to Paris. I literally didn't know what a carbohydrate or a protein was.

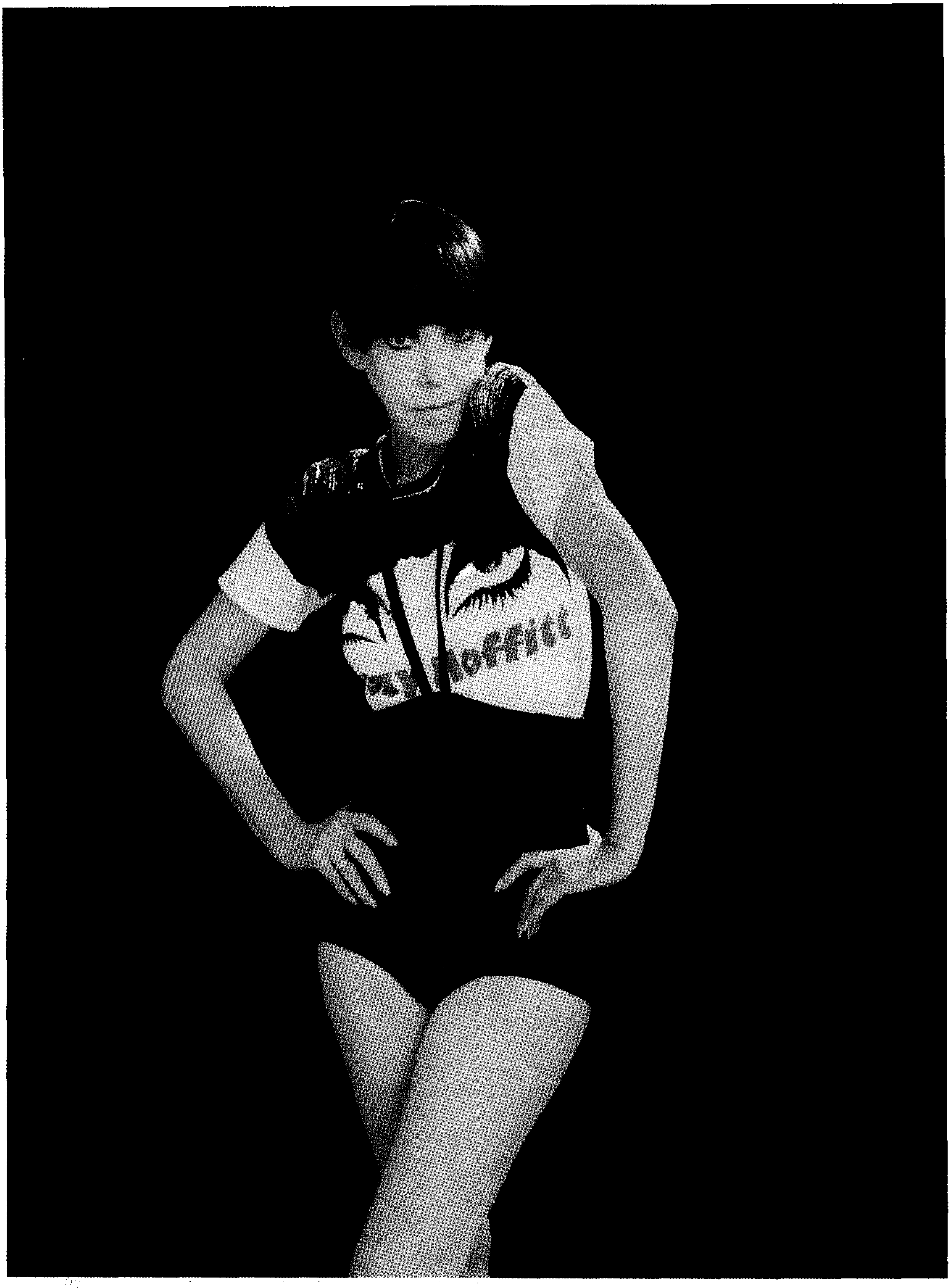
"But then I went to Givenchy," he continued. "And I was responsible for two lines and a lot of work and many employees. I needed to find some kind of balance in my life." Balance is a difficult concept for Galliano. Even now, Frédéric told me, he has simply shifted his obsession with night life to an obsession with his physique. "John doesn't just want to have good pecs," Frédéric said, as Galliano lowered himself onto a bench to lift weights. "John wants to have the best pecs in Paris." Galliano's entire day is built around making sure that he gets his time in at the gym. "Everyone says it's the same high as with drugs," he told me. "It's that little burst of light you are always looking for."

Frédéric had us stretch a bit to unwind from our "warmup" run. "Ready for the abs?" he asked. It was a rhetorical question. He put us next to each other on mats and started on a long, slow series of sit-ups. Then crunches. Then more sit-ups. We did scores of them. It seemed to last for hours; Galliano is impish, and, while he is blindingly single-minded and ambitious, he has not lost his sense of how odd it has been to move from a life as a dissolute party boy to that of an international businessman. There are times when he clearly misses his debauched past. "You know," he said, as we raised ourselves from the mats, "if you had been with me at this hour fifteen years ago we might have been doing an entirely different kind of sit-up by now."

Galliano was a vigorous participant in the wild life of London in the nineteen-eighties. For students at St. Martin's, as for others, that life revolved heavily around the clubs, and Taboo, which was held on Thursday nights at Maximus, in Leicester Square, was at the center of it. The club had an outrageous reputation (in fact, its history will be recounted this fall in a Broadway musical starring one of its best-known customers, Boy George). "It ended up seedier than the bottom of a birdcage," one regular has said. "You had bodies lying on the dance floor. You didn't know if they'd O.D.'d or were just messing about. It was very extreme and very dangerous." No chemical or carnal pursuit was off-limits there. "It was '84, '85 that it was really happening," Galliano told me one day over lunch. "All these creative energies from the film world, the music world—it would all come together on Thursday night. I would spend the entire week putting my outfit together. It would be a full-time job, and I took it seriously. Taboo became quite notorious. There was a lot of drug use. It was *the* place to be. It became harder and harder to get in, and the harder it was the more people would try, and that made it even more exclusive."

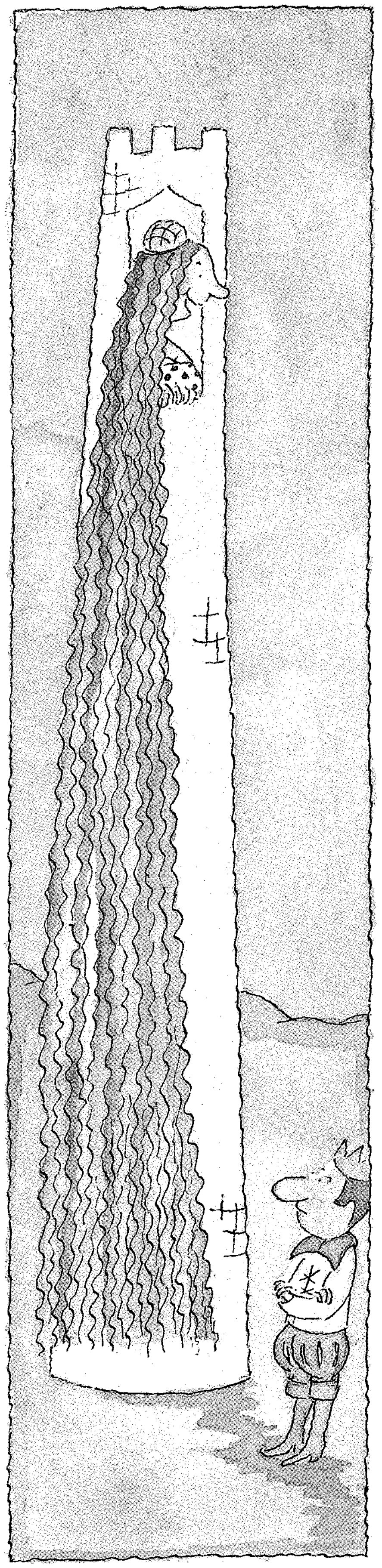
And his drug use? "Any kid in the eighties used drugs. I went to St. Martin's"—he said it as if that alone answered the question. "It was a new romantic movement, and one did experiment. I am glad I did. And I am glad that, somehow, I got through it. It helped me evolve. And I have changed, thank God. I would not want to be stuck in the Taboo days for the rest of my life. You have no idea what went on there."

Galliano was raised in the ethnic stew of South London. His father was from Gibraltar, where Galliano, whose full name is Juan Carlos Antonio Galliano-Guillen, was born. His mother is Spanish. "To get to Spain, you had to take the boat, because the frontiers were closed," he said. "We had



DEMONT

THOROUGHLY MOD *Peggy Moffitt first modelled Rudi Gernreich's famous topless bathing suit in 1964. Now Rei Kawakubo has reinterpreted it, in a new line called Peggy Moffitt/Comme des Garçons. Photograph by William Claxton.*



"When I'm not having a good hair day, you'll know."

to go through Tangier. I remember the market, the smells, the colors, the people. It was all very exciting. Romance. Latin. When we moved to London, my mother brought it all with us. Even the music. My mother taught me to flamenco-dance on tabletops—it makes more noise. She had a big influence on the way I look at the world and the way I dress people."

Galliano has two sisters, both of whom live in London. "We were dressed as well as my mother could dress us for any event, even if it was just to go to the corner shop. We were always bathed, talced, perfumed, hair slicked back. I was groomed to a T. That is very Spanish." Galliano went to a boys' school in London, and he intended to study languages. It turned out, however, that he had a gift for illustration. "At the end of that course, they suggested I apply to a fashion school like St. Martin's. I had never been in that kind of milieu before. It was totally liberating.

"I didn't have a grant, and I was living at home. There wasn't much money. And so I got a job as a dresser, at the National Theatre. That changed my life. I was a *good* dresser. It helped shape my view of drama, of clothing, of costume—the way people dress." I asked him what a "good" dresser was. "I was always on time. The clothes were always clean. If it was a period piece, the Eton collars were chalk-white, things had been pressed, moleskin top hats would be smoothed with the oil of my own hands, I would be in the right place at the right time even if it meant lying under a fucking stage for two hours until the actor made his entrance. I worked with Judi Dench, Sir Ralph Richardson, and they were people who taught me very much about bodies and clothes. And how they commanded their space."

It still had never occurred to him that he might design clothes for a living. "I tend to become whatever it is I am working on, and I was drawing pictures of the French Revolution," he went on. "I was inspired by Robespierre, '*les incroyables*.' And I was looking like this down-and-out French tramp. Living it, breathing it. Drawing by candlelight. Producing parchment paper soaked with bits of bread that are then stained with tea. Drawing with a calligraphy pen and sepia ink in this very kind of curious light. I could just imagine these fantastic creatures marching, running across the wet shiny cobblestones of Paris."

Galliano's tutor at St. Martin's suggested that he turn the drawings into outfits for his graduation presentation. "I cut clothes that could be worn inside out, upside down, and by both boys and girls," he said. "Very androgynous, but huge romantic blouses with tricolors and hems that rolled up and were split. You have to make three presentations. The first went really well. By the second, I was suddenly put on as the last act. I thought, Something has gone down here." And by the third people were struggling just to find seats. The owners of Browns, for many years London's most adventurous fashion store, attended one of the shows and bought Galliano's entire student collection for their South Moulton Street store. "I had to literally wheel my collection up the street to their shop," he told me. "I couldn't even afford to put the clothes in a cab. And they put one of the coats in the window and it was bought by Diana Ross."

After graduating from St. Martin's, Galliano set up a studio in London. He had trouble earning a living, though. His talent seemed outweighed by a lack of business skill and by a considerable desire to enjoy life, particularly at night. "I had less than no money," he said. "Zero. I was living above the garage where the studio was. Dodging the rent man. Professionally speaking, it was not the greatest moment for me."

Increasingly, he sought refuge in the London club scene. "When times were hard, John really couldn't do anything else," Jeremy Healy said. "We were at clubs till dawn day after day. It was insane, but what was he going to do? He couldn't get the work. I encouraged him to be more commercial. He always refused." For all its raw energy, London could never compete with Paris for attention within the fashion world. British designers like Vivienne Westwood and Ossie Clark have often been seen as daring or eccentric, sometimes brilliant, but they almost never earned the respect given to French, Italian, or even American designers. It is also the case that France has a collection of skilled needleworkers and a tradition of caring about clothing, which have helped Paris retain its position as the center of the fashion world.

"I had to go to Paris to continue in my career," Galliano said. "There really wasn't a choice. I was not progressing and I was not getting better." Galliano's chief lieutenant, Steven Robinson, went with him. "I was at an art school near London and I did an internship sewing buttons for John," Robinson, a quiet, heavyset man who moves with the grace of a dancer, told me. "I was too shy to come alone; I had to bring a friend. I stayed a week and then I stayed some more. And I went to college and worked one day a week. Then two days, then four days." Galliano and Robinson were not exactly welcomed with open arms in Paris. "We were producing the most beautiful things, but for dinner we were eating a can of beans on a Bunsen burner," Galliano said. One day, André Leon Talley went to visit Galliano and Robinson at Galliano's atelier, near the Bastille. "He was horrified, and he immediately started buying us McDonald's and basically fed us to keep us going," Galliano said. Talley brought his boss, Anna Wintour, the editor of *Vogue*, to see Galliano's work. She loved what she saw, and she quickly became his most influential supporter. "Before I knew it, Anna had called the collection to New York for a picture shoot," Galliano said. "Then she invited me to come, too." He attended a series of dinner parties filled with "socialites, all these fantastic people, and I was suddenly meeting bankers from Paine Webber—me meeting bankers and them wanting to talk to me. Can you imagine that?"

He still needed to convince the bankers and buyers that he was serious and stable. To do that, Galliano had to produce something for the fall, 1994, Paris collections. They were only three weeks away, and he had no cash, no venue, no clothes. Talley persuaded a socialite named Sao Schlumberger to lend Galliano her large, unused, and slightly decrepit house near Saint-Sulpice.

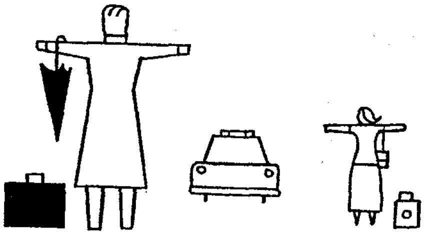
With the help of Robinson and Amanda Harlech, who now acts as the creative consultant at Chanel but for years was the muse who helped Galliano define his style, Galliano filled the house with dried leaves. "And love letters that we had written ourselves. I went and got about five hundred rusty keys and sent them as invitations." He flooded the place with dry ice, so that you could see the texture of the air. A broken chandelier was placed on the living-room floor. It was decadent and romantic. Stephen Jones, the London milliner, created a series of hats that looked like Möbius strips and worked as a perfect complement to Galliano's austere dresses. None of the participants charged for their work, not even the world's most famous models—Kate Moss, Linda Evangelista, Naomi Campbell, and Christy Turlington.

Galliano had no time to order fancy fabric; he cut every dress from the same bolt of cloth. "I made the dresses from black satin-backed crêpe, because it was cheap and I could use the matte and the shiny sides to make it look like there was more to it than there was," he recalls. "There were, I think, two touches of pink. Kate and Christy had pink outfits. Those were the only colors in the entire show. We just didn't have time for anything else."

The show became perhaps the most celebrated fashion event since Dior introduced his New Look. "It was really a watershed moment in modern fashion history," Diane von Furstenberg told me. "We all knew we were seeing something that had not been seen before. The clothes were sublime, simple and feminine. You wanted to wear every single dress."

Orders started to pour in, and Galliano barely had the means to fill them. "This was it," he recalls. "I could not fuck up or make a mistake. It had to be a very professional business or I was never getting another chance to make a dress."

At about eight o'clock on the night before Galliano's most recent show, his two main collaborators were lying on their stomachs on the floor of the ballroom-size fitting space in the Dior headquarters. Bill Gaytten, who has directed the cutting of Galliano's clothes for twenty years, and Robinson, whom many now see as Galliano's alter ego, were matching stockings with shoes, gloves, jewelry, hair clips, and underwear. When they assembled items they thought worked well together—say, lime-green leggings, black gloves, and a mesh pushup bra—they put them in a giant Ziploc bag, pasted a label on the pack, and set it aside to go with one of the outfits.



It was an early-summer evening, before this year's record heat started to settle too heavily on the city, and the room was filled with peonies, Galliano's favorite flowers. "They are the last peonies of the season," he said, as I stared at dozens of purple and pink buds. "And that makes them the sweetest." Flamenco music was wailing so loudly that it was hard to think. "Flamenco music is always about somebody's pain," Galliano said. "It never comes out O.K. in the end. It's the perfect music to make dresses by."

Galliano sat alone at a table in the middle of the room, a pack of Marlboros in front of him at all times. He had just returned from his father's funeral, and he wasn't talking much. Every twenty minutes or so, a beautiful young woman would wander in, take off her clothes, and sit in a corner. Only after she was strapped into a corset by five assistants, or dressed in a fringed silk aubergine gown made with, among other things, fifteen pounds of glass tubes, would any of the men pay attention to her. (At one point in the evening, I watched as Gaytten and Robinson adjusted the waist and crotch of a dress worn by Natalia Vodianova, one of the world's more alluring models. They might as well have been measuring the height of a kitchen cabinet.)

Every once in a while, Galliano would stand up, take a pair of scissors, and show the seamstresses in the room that he wanted something cut tighter or in a different way. "It has to be raw and sophisticated at the same time," Galliano explained to Raffaele Ilardo, the head of the atelier. "You need to slash it more." By 3 A.M., all the models had appeared and Galliano had studied the clothes carefully—usually looking at them in the mirror rather than directly. There was more to do: several of the dresses were not completed, and there was embroidery and detail work to worry about, not to mention the complicated mix of Healy's music, which would have to synchronize exactly with the light show and with the models' entrances.

Galliano's collections are mapped out like a military campaign. They start with a conversation among Galliano, Robinson, and Gaytten. "We produce these books, and they become the bible from which we work," Galliano told me. "Then we talk about the concept of the show. We have to have a new way of cutting or a new way of seeing things. And that dialogue turns into a sketch, and then the work begins."

Galliano's shows are always built around a theme: one focussed on escaping from Russia at the fall of the Romanovs; another was inspired by Napoleon. The dresses in the recent collection were intended to portray different aspects of dance—from the tribal rhythms of India to hip-hop. But Galliano did not want simply to make the clothes of, say, the flapper era or the tango. That would have bored him. "I want the models to look as though they had been dancing for eight days and eight nights," he said. "I want to see the sweat and the grime and the exhaustion and the fear and the pain. I want agony in the expression and in the clothes. I want to feel it. I want to rip and tear it and cut it until the pain is in the dresses. And then we will create a new dance from that. It could be a very John Galliano moment."

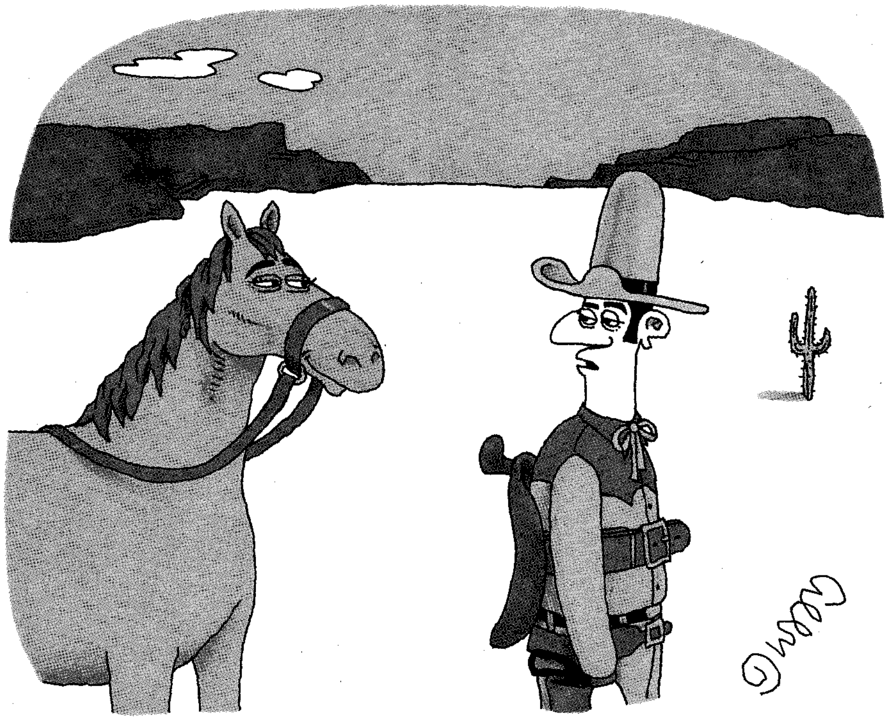
Steven Robinson shook his head and said, "This is so much work for twenty minutes you can hardly believe we keep doing it."

Galliano's place in two related but distinct fashion worlds makes for some odd contrasts. In mood and temperament, the Dior and Galliano lines could not be more different. Dior appeals to a flashy young crowd. The word "Eurotrash" comes to mind. Galliano's own line is simpler and more feminine. When Christian Dior opened his atelier, just after the end of the Second World War, he bought an old mansion on the Avenue Montaigne. It looked exactly like the salon in "Funny Face"—full of curving bannisters and stately parlors where women of leisure could sip tea while contemplating the purchase of a ball gown. Today, the corridors are lined with stark, black-and-white pictures from Dior's time of glory: a 1950 Cartier-Bresson photograph of him in his studio examining the clothing on a model; another, from 1954, of the designer with Jane Russell. There are also pictures of Marlene Dietrich and the Duchess of Windsor. All the photographs are framed in black. Turn the corner and you can see another kind of shot entirely: the model Gisele Bündchen, in superrealistic color and in a size far bigger than any life. Sweat clings to her skin so clearly that you almost feel obligated to examine every pore.

On the fifth floor, Dior seamstresses work quietly in white butcher smocks, tape measures dangling from their necks. One can sense the effort and concentration as they spend hundreds of hours preparing the beaded, sequinned, and bejewelled concoctions that Galliano will put on the runway. His own atelier, in the more ethnically mixed and funky Twentieth Arrondissement, has a Middle Eastern feel to it. There are Turks and Moroccans, and the smell of espresso mingles with the sounds of reggae. The garden there is like a jungle, and Galliano told me that it's the one place in Paris where he feels completely "safe."

I had long wondered how on earth one can make money on haute couture. Even in the nineteen-fifties, there were just a few women eager to spend what might be a bus conductor's annual salary on an ornately designed piece of fabric. Who, for instance, is likely to buy the most complex dress that Galliano produced for this show? It was a silk wine-colored gown with three hundred and ten pleated insertions, which were used to create the skirt and the sleeves. The dress was edged with a two-hundred-and-twenty-metre strip of black lace, and it had been embroidered with a technique made up of three different forms of stitching. There were sequins, pearl drops, and pearl tubes, not to mention hundreds of jet beads. The dress took nineteen people four hundred and twenty hours to make.

"Who are you going to sell that to?" I asked. Galliano seemed surprised at my question. "We are turning away orders," he replied. "But the couture is a laboratory, and from it I decline my collection"—meaning that he turns the exotic clothing of the runway into many types of outfits that people might actually wear. Indeed, a close examination of the clothes in any Dior boutique will reveal pieces adapted from the couture collection. Today, haute couture functions as Dior's most powerful marketing tool—it is the basis for everything from dresses to eyewear and shoes. "John uses the couture to work out his most advanced ideas," Joseph Boitano, of Saks, told me. "But he has a real focus on the business and how to drive it and what the cus-



"Just remember, we switch back before we get to town."

tomer wants. No matter how wild the shows seem, he never lets go of the customer." Galliano gets annoyed by questions about the utility of his dresses. "It's like going into a museum, looking at a Rothko, and saying, 'My kid could paint that,'" he replied when I asked. "It's abstract and it's art. Frankly, that ought to be enough.

"In case you have the feeling that I am flying too far from the earth, though, you should remember that while I make these dresses I have girls sitting and sketching every step, and at some point I will say, 'You know, that dress is really beautiful. That dress we could just cut now.' It's the difference between fashion and clothes." One of his sketch artists stepped over and showed me what he meant. She was carrying a very detailed series of drawings that followed the evolution of one dress from plain to interesting and then to intensely weird. "Of course, I am passionate about the collection and I want to see all the passion and the pain," Galliano said. "But then I am also thinking, Fuck, this is a wicked Oscar dress. Let's just sketch it."

It was getting late. I asked if Galliano cut his cloth to suit the clients or if they had to do what Galliano thought was best. "We are gentle, yet there are some clients that have a fixed idea," he replied. "There was a charming girl—an Arabian client—who wanted to look like Cinderella for her wedding. So I did my interpretation of Cinderella. But no. She wanted to look literally like the cartoon Cinderella. The customer is always right, I know, and we tried, we really did try, but this one wanted to look like the Walt Disney Cinderella. So we proposed ideas and sent drawings, and they would come back. 'I want Cinderella.' And we would alter it a bit and they would come back. She just wanted to look like Cinderella, for God's sake. It was impossible." Huffing, then laughing a bit, he said, "But that was her dream, and in the end we did it. What other choice was there?"

THE SCHMOOZY REAPER
So what's new? How's the family? Did you have a good summer? You guys go to Nantucket, right?

It is easy to see fashion, particularly the haute couture, as irrelevant and frivolous. A couture dress is by definition something exceptional, something that cannot be made in a factory or in large quantities. It is also based essentially on whim, often strange whims; you are unlikely ever to see a woman walking down the street in Galliano's corset of duchess satin, which is embroidered with nearly a thousand micro-crystals made by Lesage.

Yet haute couture remains a serious business in Paris. In an age when the red carpet at the Oscars has become a sort of Super Bowl of fashion—and the designers of the dresses worn by actresses are mentioned on television everywhere—couture clothing may even have gained new relevance. During Fashion Week in Paris, ask nearly any taxi-driver what time Dior is showing, and you will get the answer; you won't need to give him the address.

Galliano stood silently through his show, watching on a monitor backstage until it was time to march down the runway. As he emerged, he was met with a roar, and he looked like a bullfighter, drenched with sweat, packed into his costume: gray-and-blue embroidered track pants, a mesh corset over a gray T-shirt which was cut deep enough to expose his muscles, and suède boots. When he was done, I joined him backstage as he made his way, escorted by security men with necks the size of refrigerators, toward his tiny dressing space. The fashion editors of the world—joined by celebrities like Jack Nicholson and Elizabeth Hurley—were waiting to congratulate him.

"Are you all right?" Galliano asked me. Sweat was streaming down his face, and he looked stunned. I was a little taken aback by the question. "Sure," I replied. "Are you?"

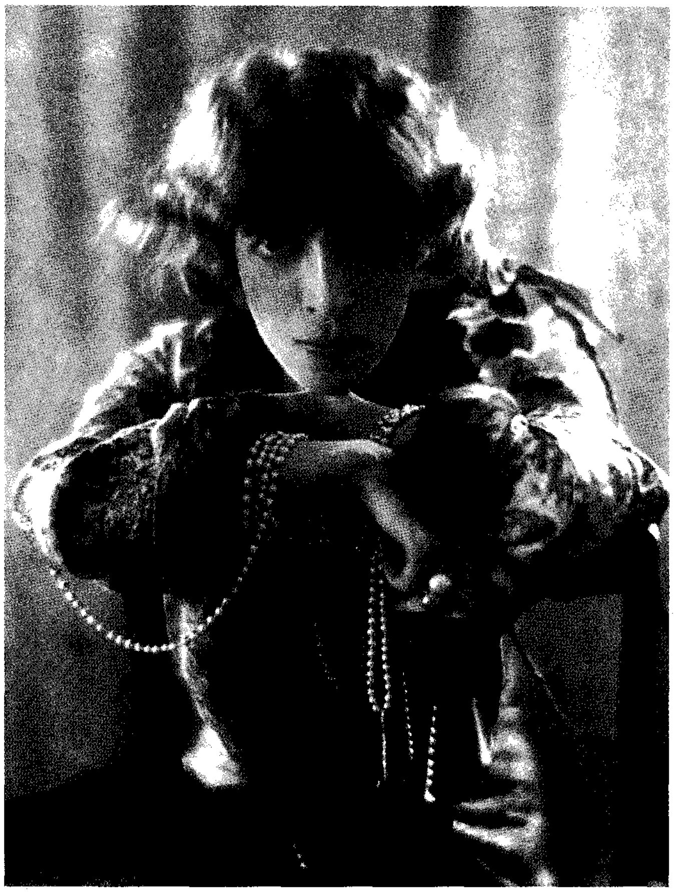
He burst into tears. "I don't know," he said. "That was for my father today. I hope I would have made him proud." ♦

IN FASHION

THE DIVINE MARQUISE

Luisa Casati's Belle Époque fetishes and perverse costumes no longer seem so outré.

BY JUDITH THURMAN



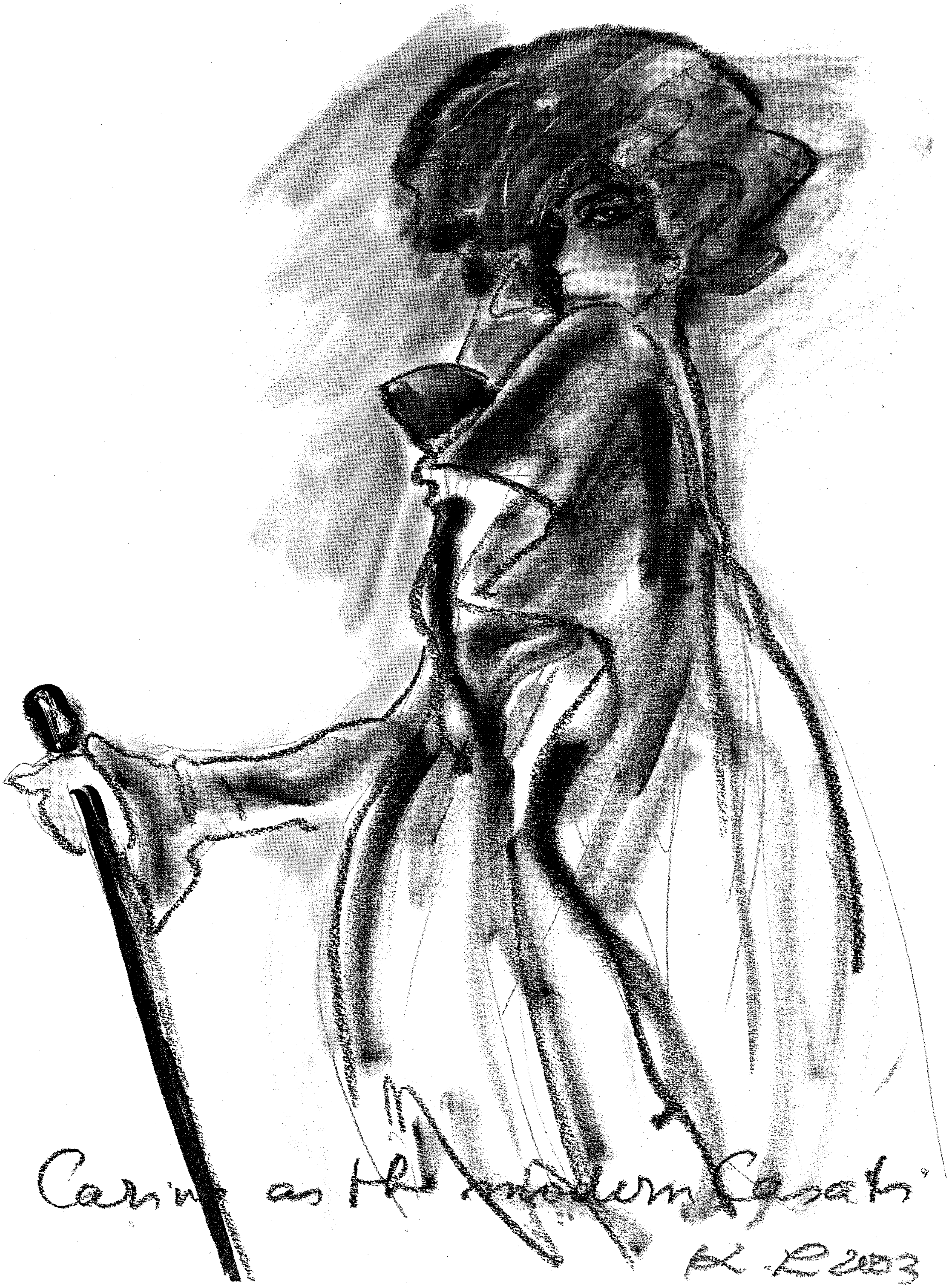
COURTESY CASATI ARCHIVES

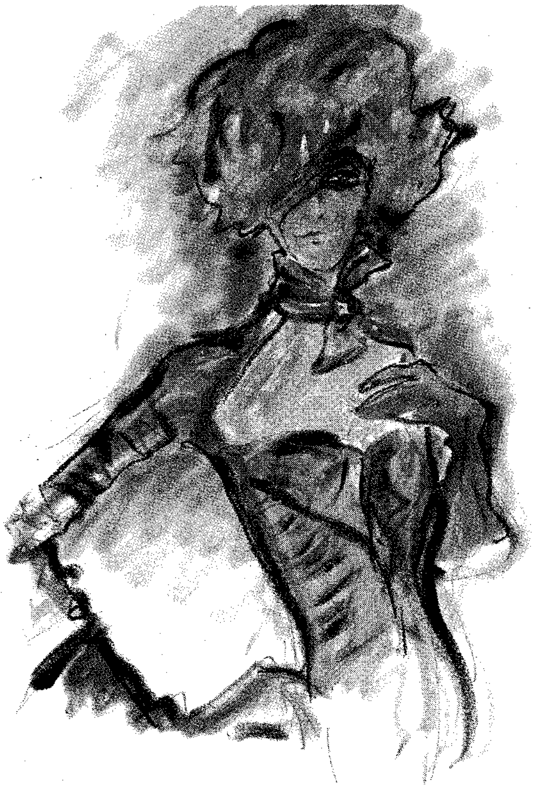
Few priestesses of fashion have been better endowed for their vocation than Luisa Casati, a Milanese aristocrat who was born in 1881 to immense wealth, and who, having probably spent more money on clothes and jewels than any queen in history, died penniless in 1957. The Marchesa was exceptionally tall and cadaverous, with a head shaped like a dagger and a little, feral face that was swamped by incandescent eyes. She brightened their pupils with belladonna and blackened their contours with kohl or India ink, gluing a two-inch fringe of false lashes and strips of black velvet to the lids. Her cheekbones were vertiginous, her nose aquiline, her mouth a lurid gash. She powdered her skin a fungal white and dyed her hair to resemble a corona of flames. This alarming mask, as Cocteau observed, gave men the illusion that the woman who wore it had willfully ravaged a great beauty—a beauty she didn't, in fact, possess.

Casati's totem animal, like Medusa's, was the snake: a creature that sloughs its skin and mesmerizes with its stare. She prided herself on the freshness of the shocks her appearance delivered. Her contemporaries couldn't decide if she was a vampire, a bird of paradise, an androgyne, a goddess, an enigma, or a common lunatic. Her clothes were as esoteric as the symbols on a wizard's hat—formulas for improving on nature. Among her more memorable get-ups was a suit of armor pierced with hundreds of electric arrows that short-

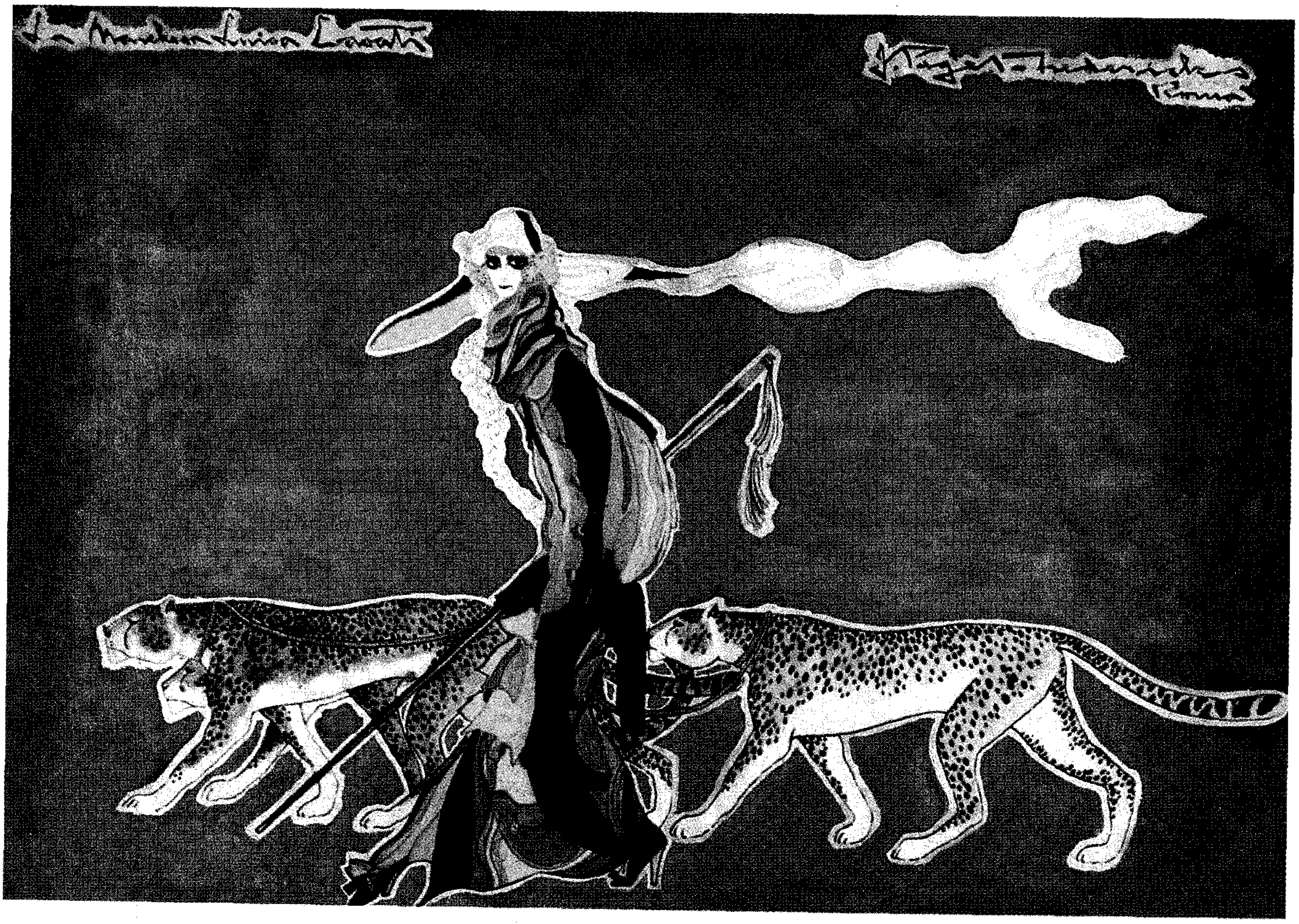
PORTFOLIO BY KARL LAGERFELD

To reinvent Casati, the designer Karl Lagerfeld channelled her idiosyncratic spirit in a series of sketches and photographs of Carine Roitfeld, the editor of French Vogue. "She has the same bone structure and wildly daring fashion sense," Lagerfeld says. "She plays a modern Casati, but the drama of Casati was that she was not playing." Above: Baron Adolph de Meyer's portrait of Casati circa 1912.


Carina as the modern Casati
K L 2003



Above: Lagerfeld's portrait of Roitfeld in a man's military coat by Hedi Slimane and a couture dress by Chanel. Below: his sketch of her in an evening dress by Gucci. Right: Casati in 1913. Opposite: the Marchesa walking her pet cheetahs, painted by Joseph Paget-Fredericks in the nineteen-forties.

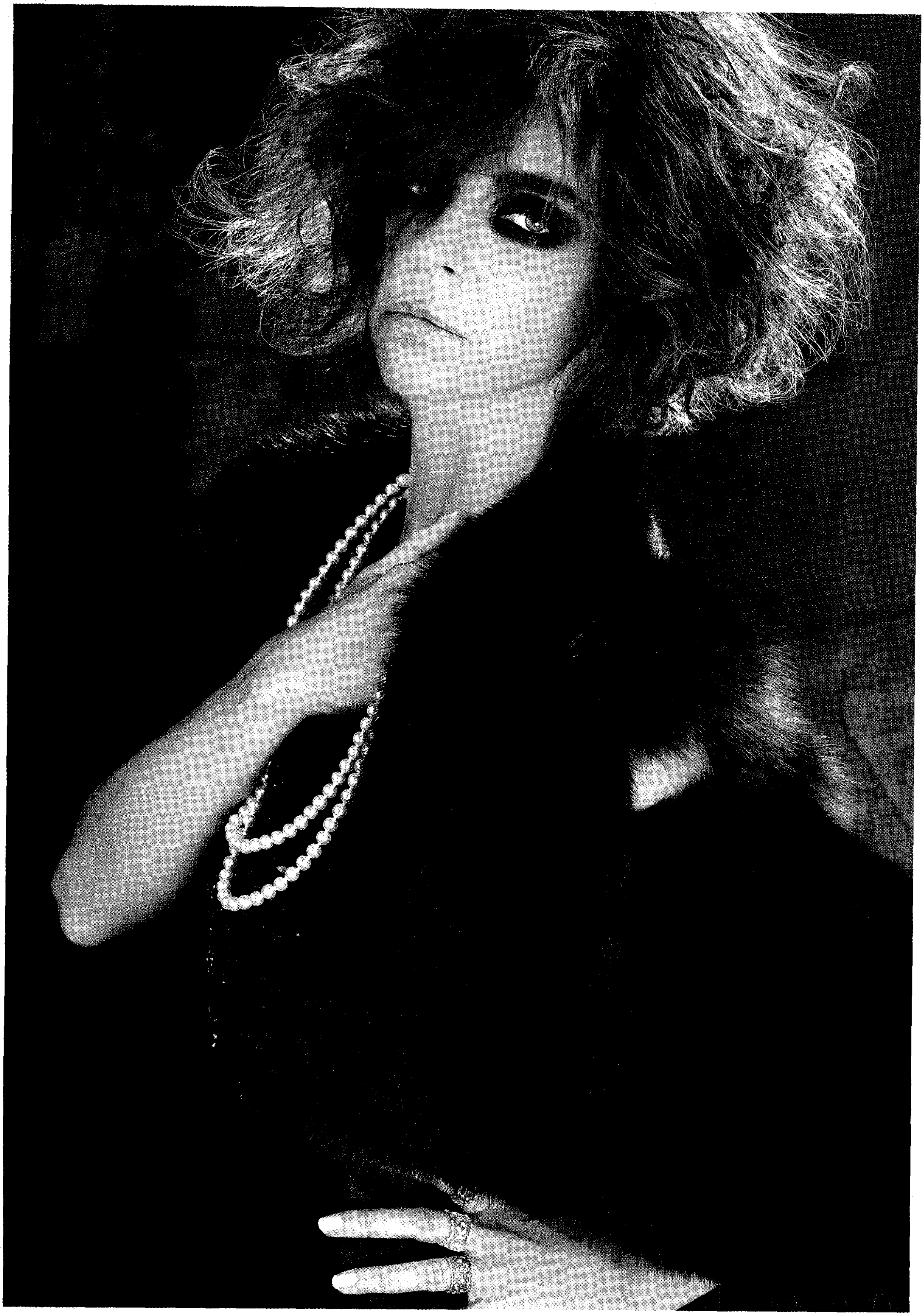


ABOVE AND OPPOSITE RIGHT: COURTESY CASATI ARCHIVES

circuited and nearly fried her; an iridescent necklace of live snakes that slithered from her bare shoulders at a ball; and a headdress of peacock tail feathers accessorized, for a night at the opera, by the blood of a freshly slaughtered chicken.

The Futurists and the Surrealists recognized that the radical impudence of Casati's experiments with dress were kindred to their own artistic provocations (as, later, did Kerouac, who wrote, "Marchesa Casati / Is a living doll / Pinned on my Frisco / Skid row wall"). She commissioned a life-size wax mannequin of herself, with eyes of green glass and a wig purportedly made from her own hair; it sat at her dinner table dressed as her twin, and she brought it to Paris for fittings at Poiret. An emissary from Schiaparelli sent to solicit her business found her in bed in her hotel suite "covered with a rug of black ostrich feathers, eating a breakfast of fried fish and drinking straight Pernod while trying on a newspaper scarf." To a performance of the Ballets Russes, she wore a gown of egret plumes that molted in the course of the evening. For a summer of drug abuse and sorcery on Capri, in 1920, she packed a wardrobe of black dresses with cathedral trains, dyed her hair green, painted the body of her servant gold (he collapsed in the heat and was saved from suffocation by her landlord, who scraped off the gilding), and paraded through the village streets carrying a crystal ball. But when she really wanted to outdo herself, Casati wore nothing. The residents of Venice were regularly treated to the midnight apparition of their richest and thinnest neighbor strolling through St. Mark's Square perfectly nude and lunar white beneath a fur cloak, accompanied by two cheetahs on diamond-studded leashes and a majestic Negro retainer bearing torches to illuminate the scene.

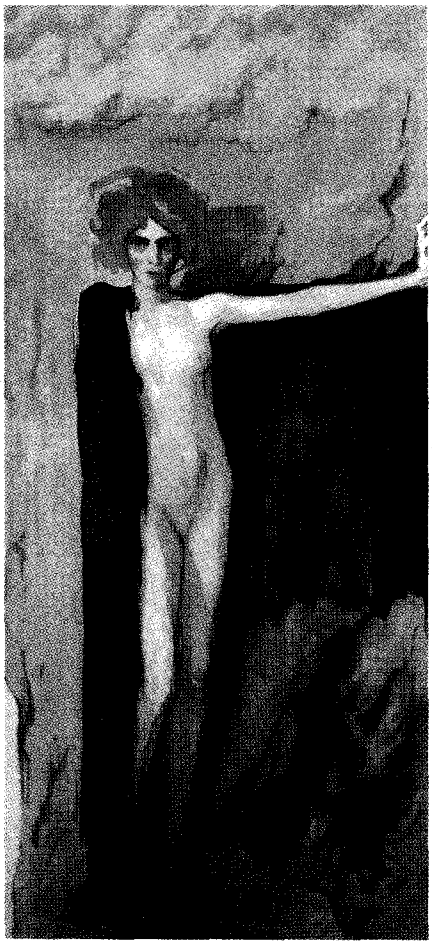
The only biography of Casati in English, "Infinite Variety," by Scot D. Ryersson and Michael Orlando Yaccarino, was published four years ago and is out of print, but it deserves to be revived. The authors are judicious historians of frivolity who capture the tone of a life that was obscenely profligate yet strangely pure. Their subject was born Luisa Annan, the daughter of a prodigiously successful, self-made Milanese textile magnate who was ennobled by his frequent houseguest King Umberto I. Both Count Annan and his wife died when their two daughters were teen-agers, leaving them one of the, if not the, greatest industrial fortunes in Italy. Luisa received a typically sketchy private education, lived in the shadow of her prettier older sister, made a decorous début, and married the scion of an ancient family, the Marchese Casati Stampa di Soncino, a future president of the Roman Jockey Club. (They had a spunky only child, Cristina, neglected by her parents from an early age, who studied at Oxford and eloped with an English lord who was said to share her Communist sympathies.) For a few years, the young Marchesa dressed decently and lived dutifully, if opulently, as a conventional matron of her class. But at twenty-two she was seduced by Gabriele D'Annunzio, the charismatic writer, warrior, satyr, spiritualist, demagogue, and "Prince of Decadence," who was her greatest love, a man eternally on the run from his creditors, and thus



ever on the prowl for an indulgent mistress. Neither he nor Casati was capable of fidelity, but she became his muse, and he helped to cultivate her horror of the mundane—a quality definitive of the fashion priestess, and one that probably originates, as it did for Casati, in repugnance for the glum and ordinary little girl in whose body and existence she was once trapped.

The Marchesa's flamboyant affair with D'Annunzio was ignored for years by her husband, and it eventually burned down to the friendship of two charming and predatory mythomaniacs who practiced black magic and communicated mostly by cryptic telegram. But once he had aroused her appetite for the poetry of excess, no extravagance could slake it. Her treasures piled up. She spent as much on the jewel-encrusted gown and headdress that Léon Bakst designed for one of her legendary masked revels as J. P. Morgan paid for his custom-fitted Rolls-Royce. Her crumbling palace on the Grand Canal (it was later owned by another priestess, Peggy Guggenheim) was decorated with rare gemstones, priceless lace, hothouse flowers, and Egyptian statuary. There, and in her Roman mansion and her Parisian villa, she installed menageries of exotic animals—not only the cheetahs but lion cubs, owls, panthers, monkeys, peacocks, a gorilla, albino blackbirds, greyhounds powdered pink and mauve, a parrot that squawked obscenities, and a boa constrictor that travelled with her everywhere in a plush-lined glass case.

It has to be said that while Casati outdid—and certainly outspent—her models, and inspired numerous imitators, though none so fantastic as she, her signature perversities weren't that original. The Princess di Belgiojoso, a man-eater much beloved of the Romantics, pioneered the macabre makeup and hair. Huysmans published "Against Nature," which might have been her decorating manual, when the Marchesa was three. Wilde's "Salomé" had its Paris première twelve years later. And by the height of the Belle Époque, when Casati hit her stride, it had long been fashionable for femmes fatales to keep nasty pets. The French writer Rachilde, for example, adopted two sewer rats that she named Kyrie and Eleison. When Rachilde was sentenced (in absentia) to two years in a Belgian prison for her scandalous novel "Monsieur Venus," in which a virile noblewoman sexually enslaves a young male florist, Verlaine offered his congratulations: "Ah, my dear child, if you have invented a new vice, you are the benefactor of humanity."



Above: Casati photographed by Man Ray in 1922. Below: a 1920 nude study by Romaine Brooks. Opposite: Roitfeld in a slashed mink bolero by Rick Owens for Revillon over a brocaded top by Tom Ford for YSL. Costume jewelry by Buccellati; pearls by Chanel.

TOP: © 2003 MAN RAY TRUST/ARS, NY/ADAGP, PARIS; COURTESY LUCILE AUDOUY/CASATI ARCHIVES

Because the Marchesa Casati's gorgeous if somewhat comically ghoulish figure haunts the memoirs of her heyday (particularly those nostalgic accounts of Belle Époque and Jazz Age high life written in a drawling tone by the hardy gadabouts who never missed a well-etherized orgy), I encountered her at two separate moments in my life, fifteen years apart: first, when I was writing about Isak Dinesen, and later doing research on Colette. Casati and Colette, both great believers in the spirit world, patronized the same fashionable mediums and frequented a circle of louche-minded grandees that included Jean Lorrain, Robert de Montesquiou, Baronne Elsie Deslandes, Baron Adelsward-Fersen, Isadora Duncan, Diaghilev, the Princesse de Polignac (née Winaretta Singer), Natalie Barney, and D'Annunzio (whose mistress, when Colette befriended him, in 1915, was her second husband's rich first wife). But it would be hard to find two women better designed to loathe each other, despite a shared gift for malice and a penchant for exhibitionism. Colette was a truculently fleshy and frugal "child of nature," perennially hardworking and allergic to morbidity. Casati was a devotee of fetishism who proudly displayed the bruises and teeth marks of her love games with D'Annunzio. "Flesh," he wrote on an arresting photograph of "the Divine Marquise" by Baron de Meyer, "is merely spirit betrothed to death." Behind her back, though, the Parisians dubbed her "the Venus of Père Lachaise."

Dinesen, on the other hand, seems to have styled the witchy persona of her old age—that of Baroness Blixen—after Casati. By birth, they belonged to the same class, the nouveaux riches, and to the same generation of women who aspired to be as dangerous as their mothers had been harmless. Though I have no evidence that they met, they almost certainly crossed paths in Paris. Before and after the First World War, Casati lived there for months at a time, usually at the Ritz, taxing its staff with her tantrums and with the tiresome daily job of feeding live chickens and rabbits to the ubiquitous boa. Dinesen, who preferred the St. James and Albany, which had a Danish concierge, stopped on her way from Kenya to Copenhagen to replenish her wardrobe at Paquin and Lewis (the couture milliner), even as her coffee plantation was going bankrupt. (She brought along two African pages dressed in picturesque native regalia, who carried her parcels and slept in her bathtub.) It was an indulgence that Casati—who went bankrupt at the same time (1930-31)—would have approved. Dinesen and Casati shared a taste for pasty foundation and sooty eyes; for venerable titles acquired from complacent, much poorer husbands obsessed with blood sport; and for Oriental barbarism filtered through a gauze of ancien-régime snobbery. Though the Marchesa would never have been caught dead in the fastidiously tailored gray suit that the Baroness called "Sober Truth," they both prided themselves on an emaciated figure. Dinesen held that the only dignified way for a woman to age is to become a skeleton. She, however, was naturally rather dumpy and had to battle a hearty appetite, and she didn't achieve her ideal weight (about eighty pounds) until middle age, and then only with the help of syphilis, anorexia, chain-smoking, and amphetamines. Casati seems to have enjoyed her lifelong career as a wraith without troubling to diet, though perhaps her secret was cocaine.

Unlike Colette, who was intolerant of those who let life consume them, Dinesen believed devoutly in throwing oneself away. She once told a journalist that her favorite expression in the English language was "regardless of expense" (though she was rather more reckless with other people's assets than with her own). Casati was so sublimely innocent of prudence that she spent every penny of her colossal patrimony on palaces, parties, antiques, cars, clothes, jewels, travels with a princely retinue, and art (mostly portraits of herself). By the time the Depression overtook her, she was twenty-five million dollars in debt. Her last telegram to D'Annunzio begged him to wire her ten thousand lire, but the cad never replied.

"I want to be a living work of art," Casati proclaimed. Her startling appearance and peerless imagination for costume and décor promised a good play, but—as Cocteau put it bluntly—"there was none." (There was none yet. He had never attended that modern theatre with which the Marchesa's inspired fashion stunts have the most affinity: the couture runway.) Her nerve never failed her, though her flesh did. "Eccentricity," the French belletrist Maurice Druon wrote, "is tolerable only in its first freshness. Cherished until it has gone stale, it becomes unbearably pathetic." He was thinking of Casati, who, in trying too hard to be unique, inevitably became a type. She was a model for the heroine of his 1954 novel, "La Volupté d'Être," which was translated into English as "The Film of Memory" and adapted for the stage as "La Contessa," with Vivien Leigh in the title role, and for the screen as "A Matter of Time," starring Ingrid Bergman. Despite their illustrious leading ladies, play and film were equally wretched flops, in part, perhaps, because Casati transformed herself into a dazzling but ephemeral spectacle, like a display of fireworks, while neglecting those aspects of being—thought and feeling—that enrich a narrative. Her allure was better suited to a picture frame, and she infatuated a number of important artists (Marinetti, Van Dongen, Man Ray, Romaine Brooks, and Augustus John among others), whose portraits capture the fever of her studied ferocity.

Casati hated getting old but she accepted destitution with a stoical, even eerie, aplomb. This suggests that her most obvious weakness—indifference to reality—was a form of strength. After the forced liquidation of her Parisian villa, the Palais Rose, and its contents, she moved to London, where she bartered the few treasures she had managed to salvage for rent, tarot readings, and food for her Pekinese dogs. As each dog died, she had it stuffed, and forwarded the taxidermist's bill to her granddaughter. She spent her last years in a cheap bed-sit, casting spells on her enemies (Cecil Beaton was one—he betrayed her with a candid photo of her sagging chin and a disobliging passage in his memoirs) and compiling three volumes of a strange journal: a dreamlike assemblage of newspaper and magazine clippings. In one collage, an elegant, old-fashioned razor and two ripe peaches with suggestive lobes are juxtaposed with a Gulliverian, bejewelled Henry VIII, who dwarfs an entourage of Lilliputian females, all but one with her head snipped off. Other pages featured images of Rasputin and the Duchess of Windsor: "The evident care with which they were constructed shows that this was no random amusement," her biographers write. But the minute her friends suggested that she mount an exhibition of her journals, if only to raise some badly needed cash, she abandoned the project. "The Marchesa," Philippe Jullian observed, "seemed to have a genuine horror of money."

Perhaps, however, she had come to the conclusion, with Dinesen, who starved herself to death five years after Casati died of a cerebral hemorrhage, that there is a supreme cachet—even a nobility—in losing everything but one's style. Poor as she was, and increasingly addled by gin and drugs, she never ceased dressing to produce a sensational effect. Jullian had seen her, he claimed, rummaging through trash bins—not for food, of course, but for scraps of velvet or lace. "When Luisa Casati walked along the streets of London," Druon wrote, "it took all of the dignity of the English not to just gawk at this phantom" with a livid face, a crooked hat, and a threadbare black gown, half unravelled and trimmed in crackled leather or mangy fur—the finery of a madwoman. Today, of course, the hip wouldn't gawk; they would marvel at her chic. Fashion has abolished the distinction between day and evening, and nothing is more modern than frayed seams, outré makeup, Goth bleakness, and customized vintage. Casati realized her most cherished ambition, though perhaps not in the form she had imagined: foretelling the future. ♦

Opposite: Roitfeld in Roberto Cavalli's floor-length black-and-white mink evening coat with an exaggerated train worked in a giant spiderweb pattern. Hair by Stéphane Lancien for Jean Louis David; makeup by Christelle Cocquet for Shiseido.

THE CRITICS

BOOKS

EXPOSURES

Helmut Newton looks back.

BY ANTHONY LANE

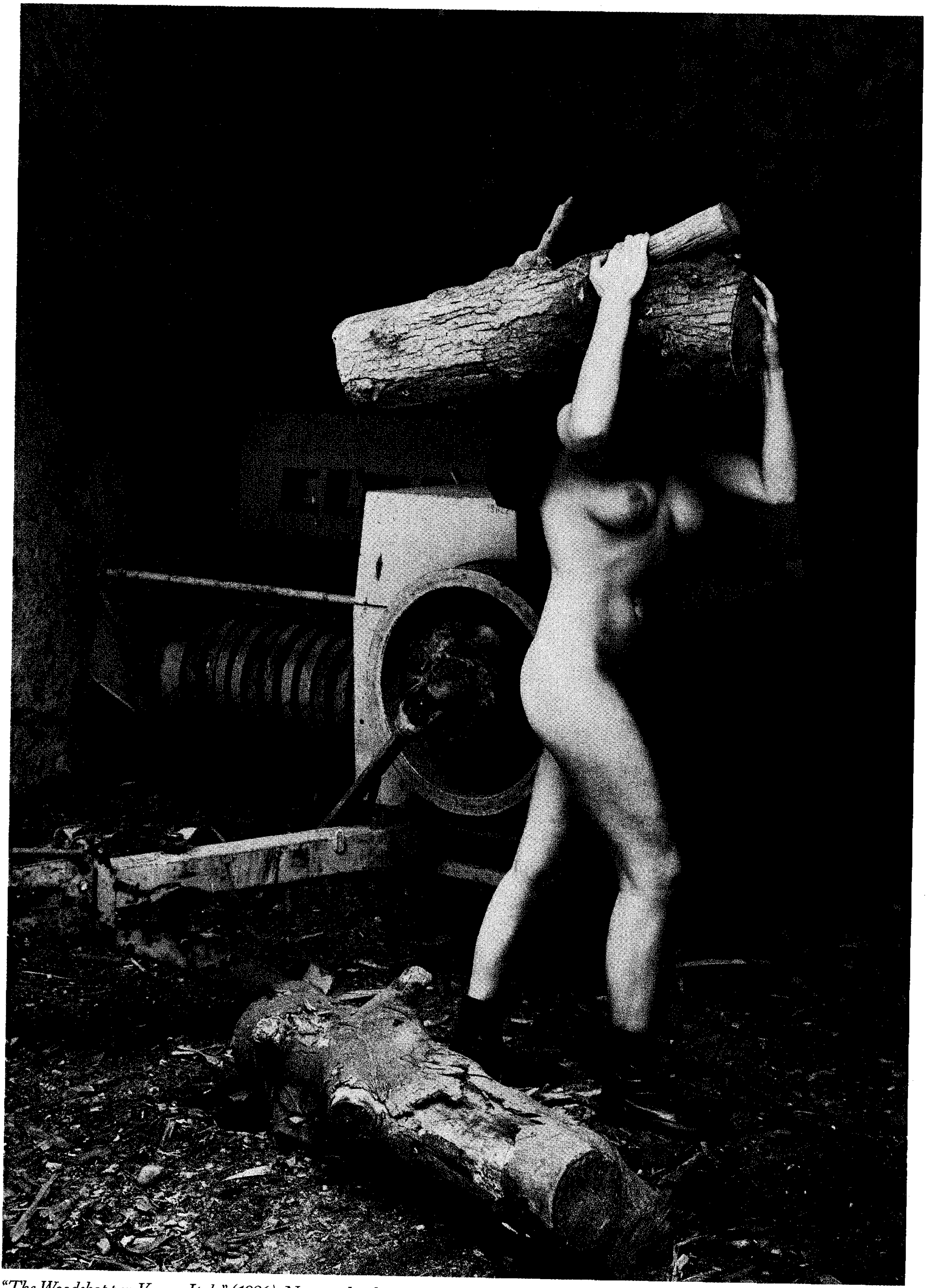
What do we learn from the autobiography of Helmut Newton? I would be thrilled to report that Mr. Newton has lived a life of blameless quietude. How pleasant it would be to discover that, after a hard day spent taking photographs of strapping Prussian nudes, their marble-hard limbs girt in sheer stockings and the pelts of severely endangered species, he likes nothing better than to hurry home to an early supper, with a clan of children capering fondly at his feet. Such, however, is not the case. If his "Autobiography" (Nan A. Talese/Doubleday; $27.95) makes one thing clear, it is that, compared with his inflammatory existence, his photographs—which have sealed his notoriety over fifty years, and which are readily identified by no more than the slope of a buttock—are mere shadows on the wall.

He was born in 1920, in Berlin, which comes as no surprise. Indeed, wherever he has lived—dull suburban dumps, for the most part, like Singapore, Paris, and Monte Carlo—Newton has not so much registered his taut, nostalgic weakness for Berlin as carried Berlin with him. He always manages to find and photograph the kind of woman who would have been happiest when striding down the Kurfürstendamm in crisply laced ankle boots in the autumn of 1928. More cleverly, by way of a backdrop, he seems able to summon a Germanic time of day—or, better still, a granular night ("black light," he calls it), heavy with the promise of corruption. The big revelation, therefore, is not that Newton is a Berliner but that he is a Berlin Jew. His real name is Helmut Neustaedter. His father, Max, was a wealthy button manufacturer, and the family conducted one of those nicely upholstered, entirely secular lives that made German Jewry feel—with good reason, and with unimagined consequences—as richly rooted in the national experience as any other part of the population. The Neustaedters celebrated Christmas rather than Hanukkah; Helmut and his half brother, Hans, never had a bar mitzvah, and Hans was not even circumcised. Their mother, Claire, was a snob and a spoiler with good legs, who fired a maid for dressing too well on her day off, and who clad the infant Helmut in patent-leather shoes and velvet suits with taffeta bows. That was the least of it: "I was brought up never to touch a banister. . . . I had my own private sandbox. . . . I used to faint all the time. . . . I also had very weak ankles." Nevertheless, Claire was terrified "that her little Helmie would turn homosexual."

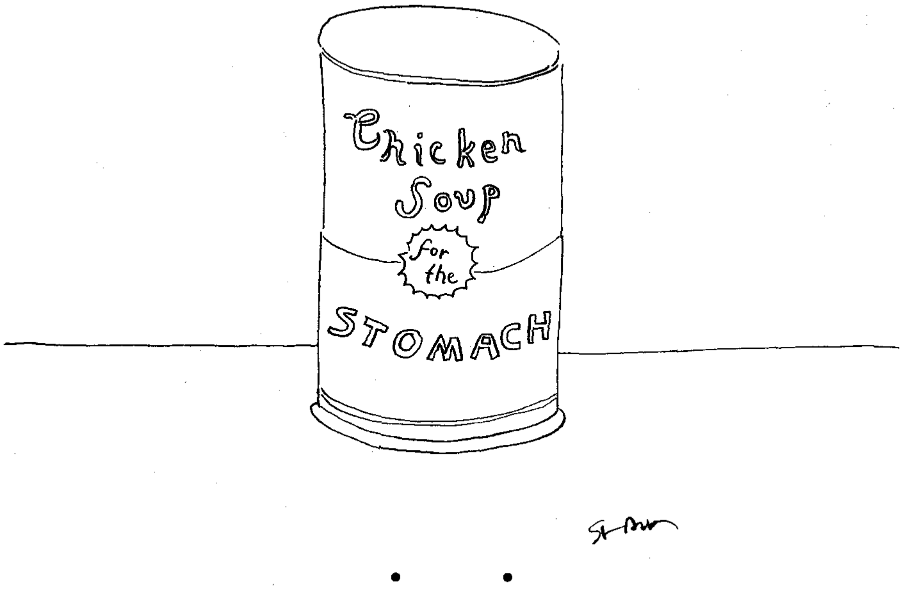
She needn't have worried. Boy, did he not turn homosexual. Little Helmie grew into big Helmie, and big Helmie did stuff with big girls that would have made *liebe Mutti* fall sideways into the sandbox. He even published a book called "Big Nudes," and another, his first, called "White Women." If some of Newton's females—essentially, glaciers with breasts—stare at the camera through a monocle, a lens of their own, that is probably because Max Neustaedter affected the same habit. By far the most detailed portion of the "Autobiography" is set in Berlin, and rightly so, for without that boyhood there would have been nothing to pollinate the lush fantasies of the adult. What makes the book so alarming is its refusal to obey the rules. The cutie with the taffeta bows could so easily have grown up gay, and his status as a pawn of circumstance ought, by rights, to have lent some coloring of compassion to his subsequent art. Not so. Young Helmut felt the pressure of History, but his own history always came first. In the summer of 1935, he fell for an Aryan girl—a perilous motion of the heart, but, "when you're fourteen years old and you're in love, what do you do? Whatever it is, you certainly don't think about Nuremberg racial laws!"

The laws had been drafted the previous year, and Helmut had seen the threat: "I was pretty much awake to it but didn't give a shit one way or the other." Many readers will frown at such irresponsibility, but it is easy to glance back in time and honor only the brave. It is harder, but just as necessary, to honor those who craved the basic freedom to be irresponsible. Newton attended the Heinrich von Treitschke Real Gymnasium, on Prinzregentenstrasse, which was every bit as pro-Nazi as it sounds, and got a Death Skull Certificate in swimming at the Berliner Schwimm Club; but what has remained with him is the precise density of the girls' swimsuits, which "stayed wet for a long time," and which may explain his lifelong addiction to pools and all who laze in them. Most startling of all is his recollection of Wannsee—to every other Jew in the world, the lakeside retreat where the Final Solution was planned, but to Helmut Newton a holiday haven of smooching and skin-warmed Nivea cream. "The smell of Nivea still has a sexual connotation for me."

He was lucky to get out; somehow, all the Neustaedters made it. Not all his acquaintances were so lucky. Yva, a Berlin photographer to whom Helmut was briefly apprenticed, was murdered in Auschwitz. Helmut had long since left Germany, alone; his mother had bought him a railroad ticket to Trieste and a second-class steamer ticket to China. He stopped off at Singapore and



"The Woodchopper, Varese, Italy" (1986). Newton has long savored his reputation as a shocker.



stayed there, and this is where the "Autobiography" hots up. Somewhere in the wings of this book we catch the low rumble of war and persecution, but you can't always hear it, because there at center stage—goatish, garish, and about as unobtrusive as a rock drill—is Helmut Newton making love.

First in line was Josette Fabien, a Belgian with a suite at the Raffles Hotel and a sister called Kitty. "Josette warned me early on that if she ever caught me in bed with Kitty she'd slit my throat from ear to ear," he writes. Question: How many clichés can you count in that sentence? The older woman, the sweat of the Far East, the knife in the dark: the great thing about Newton's memoirs is that he crams and pummels the clichés until they are restored to fresh meaning. He has the further temerity to insist not only that he lived them but that they were scandalously worth living; that is why they became clichés in the first place. He has long savored his reputation as a shocker, but the truth is that his photographs were shocking only to those who, for many years, ran and read the fashion magazines—those cautiously daring temples of the artfully veiled. What a Newton picture most resembles is a glaring advertisement for some secret product, some unmentionable leisure activity, of his own devising. He has stolen the styles of the Weimar Republic, postwar Eurotrash, and the loucheness of the Château Marmont, and rendered their heated transactions of flesh at a lowered temperature. He is the Joel Grey of the camera, presiding in mock amusement (though in genuine arousal) over his cabaret of cool.

In Singapore, he joined the *Straits Times* as a local photographer, and lasted two weeks. Soon, "I realized how far I was from the goal I'd set for myself of becoming a *Vogue* photographer. Instead I'd become a trained fucker." The poor lamb. Newton was kept pretty busy not being a photographer in Singapore, although he regrets failing to trap "the Bengal Tiger," a White Russian dancer with red hair. "I tried very hard to screw the Bengal Tiger, but I had no luck." As for Josette, "our sexual relationship had advanced by leaps and bounds." It is my solemn duty to inform the reader that this is almost certainly not a metaphor. "I mean, I was the perfect age," Helmut remembers, adding shyly, "I was too good in bed." Ah, yes, *that* old problem. He and Josette left town and took a house: "There were just the two of us, plus the cook and the maid and the chauffeur." There, I suspect, is the core of the book—or, at any rate, the clearest signpost to the Newton œuvre. His photographs are crazed with presagings of sex, yet what truly gets them going is class.

Consider the twilit trip that he made with Josette, when she first unzipped his fly in the back of her black Chevrolet. Two things arise from this poignant scene. First, how do you get dark-red lipstick off the crotch of white linen shorts? Second, "I don't believe Josette was concerned about the driver seeing us at all." And that is how it plays in a classic Newton shot: somebody trilling with desire, and somebody else not exactly out of the picture but more or less out of the running. The rich go about their dirty business while other folk look on, unmoved—either because they, also, are rich, and thus far too polite to be outraged (see his trio of guests lounging in a Venetian hotel while a woman strips), or because they are from the servant class, and thus not bona-fide players of the game. Hence his 1995 image in which a redhead in scarlet heels leans against a Berlin tree trunk and opens her coat. There is nothing underneath. Beside her, the chauffeur (his black Mercedes is parked in the background) stares with roughly the level of excitement that he would display if she were unwrapping liverwurst sandwiches for a picnic. That is why people complain about Newton: not because he strips women and poses them as sternly available but because, at the same time, he has the gall to make them untouchable. One thing alone will break the lock: whatever the Beatles may have promised, money can buy you love. Now, that *is* shocking.

In 1940, Helmut Newton left Singapore, before it fell to the foe, and travelled to Australia. Throughout his life, he seems to have kept one step ahead of real catastrophe, thus liberating himself to make waves of minor trouble. In Australia, he was housed in an internment camp for anti-Nazis (pro-Nazi Germans were separately housed), where he scrubbed the latrines and ate food that was silted up with red sand. In 1942, he was released and moved to the state of Victoria, where he picked peaches for a farmer with a daughter called Sunshine. After that, improbably, Newton joined the Australian Army, where he and his European comrades in arms saw no military action but plenty of the other variety. He and his friend Philip, a part-Jewish officer who had once been expelled from the Austrian cavalry, took a room that they christened Schloss Rammelfeste, or Castle Fuck Hard. Among their joint conquests was none other than Kitty, the forbidden sister of Josette. All in all, as the author delicately phrases it, "we really fitted into the community."

After which, we sense the first flickers of success. Newton quit the Army, changed his name, and met an actress called June. The wedding took place in a Catholic church in Melbourne, in May, 1948. More than half a century later, they are still married, and the only loving photograph that I have ever seen by Newton is a Parisian shot of June in 1972—putting a match to her cigarette, seated at a dining table with a glass of wine, her top drawn aside like theatrical curtains, the better to display her bust. Newton records numerous flareups between man and wife, yet his book is admirably reticent on their shared privacy, as if profound affection, unlike pornographic lust, were something to be taken on trust rather than peeled apart. Then, out of nowhere, comes the sentence: "I was working on assignments for the Australian supplement of English *Vogue*, and in 1957 they offered me a twelve-month contract to work on *Vogue* in London."

Huh? Nothing in the book has prepared us for this launch. A vague ambition has, without explanation, grown into a job offer. Basically, the "Autobiography" ends here, although it still has a hundred and fifty more pages to go. The struggles of young Helmut have been a joy to behold, whereas the progress—however wayward—of the crescent celebrity is at once wondrously accoutred and nothing special. To his credit, Newton himself admits as much, halting his story abruptly, in the early nineteen-eighties, "for to write about one's successes, small or big, is simply of no interest to the reader." If all public figures showed such fatigue in the face of their own importance, we would be spared a lot of creaking shelves in Barnes & Noble. There is plenty to relish in the second half of Newton's memoirs—witness his astronomical memory of the Super Constellation in which he and June flew to Europe, "a gorgeous four-propeller airplane with big leather seats and a ceiling of a midnight-blue sky with stars"—but, once we are led on a familiar dance through the vale of Diana Vreeland and Alexander Liberman, something in the telling falls away.

There are moments where the "Autobiography" is barely written at all. If anything, it feels spoken, or shouted, or giggled into being: "So, anyway, there's June cooking our first dinner of sausages." The editing is subtle to the point of invisibility. I was pleased to be informed of the writer's "rip-roaring affair" with a genitally challenged Polish countess on page 115, so much so that to learn, twelve pages later, of his "rip-roaring affair" with Betty—ennobled, in her way, by "the tiniest waist and great big breasts"—slightly took the edge off my delight. In the end, however, breathlessness can be relied upon to give a buzz. Few readers will be inspired to take up photography (indeed, Newton specifically cautions against it, on financial grounds), nor will they have a clue how to mimic the torrid manner of his work; but they will be plunged instantly into the Nivea cream of 1936, and that is what counts.

Did the Jewish teen-ager get a kick, in later life, from toying with the aesthetic of his natural enemies, or has he simply given them the finger? Why, as a portraitist, has he gravitated so giddily toward subjects such as Kurt Waldheim, Jean-Marie Le Pen, and Leni Riefenstahl? Newton is no satirist, certainly; but he is an unabashed solipsist ("You know I never think of anybody else but myself"), and there is something endearing, and politically far from ineffectual, about the perpetual naughty boy who can't help bumping into the high and mighty or knocking them aside. He may tremble in the presence of power—the entire book is worth buying for the moment at which he meets his "goddess," Margaret Thatcher, "shortly after she abdicated"—but you can be sure, nevertheless, that when Newton gazes back, whether at Nazis, nudes, prostitutes, or politicians, he doesn't give a damn. "I find this kind of living in the past useless and unproductive," he writes, which, for an autobiographer, is saying something. Forget it, little Helmie. Bring on the girls. ♦

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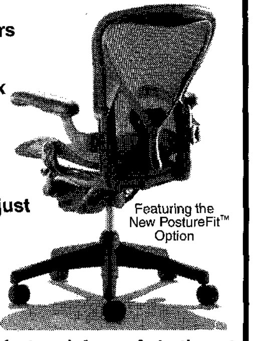
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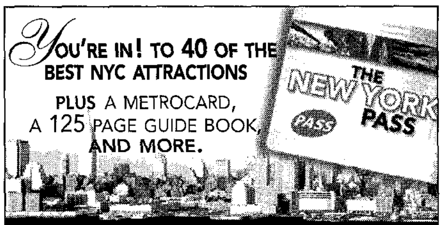
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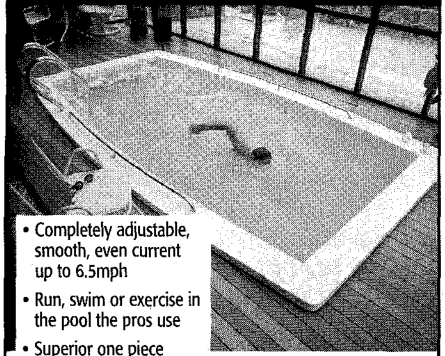

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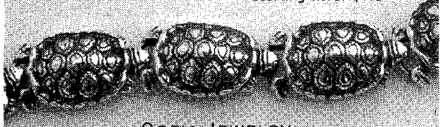

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BOOKS

A NATURAL WRITER

A new biography of John O'Hara.

BY JOHN UPDIKE

What has moved Geoffrey Wolff, the author of six novels and two previous biographies, to write "The Art of Burning Bridges: A Life of John O'Hara" (Knopf; $30)? Though O'Hara while he was alive felt, for all the fame and wealth his writings earned him, relatively slighted by critics and prize-givers, he became in the decade after his death, in 1970, the subject of three separate biographies: "O'Hara," by his friend Finis Farr (1973); "The O'Hara Concern," a "laborious excavation" (in Wolff's phrase) by that tireless excavator of twentieth-century American literary leavings Matthew J. Bruccoli (1975); and Frank MacShane's efficient, judicious "Life of John O'Hara" (1980). Also, in 1971-72 the Pottsville *Republican* ran a series of articles on O'Hara's early life by Charles W. Bassett, and in 1977 Bruccoli edited and published a collection of O'Hara's writings on writing, off-puttingly titled "An Artist Is His Own Fault." The next year, the great excavator came up with a valuable selection of O'Hara's letters, along with "John O'Hara: A Descriptive Bibliography," which includes even the blurbs that O'Hara composed. Decades after this flurry of posthumous attention, Wolff has evidently judged O'Hara ripe for a more personal treatment, a kind of interactive biography, in which his own voice and opinions freely vie, like a post-Freudian psychiatrist's, with those of his subject.

As a biographer, Wolff has been drawn to mismanaged lives: "Black Sun" (1976), subtitled "The Brief Transit and Violent Eclipse of Harry Crosby," told of a self-dramatizing Boston Brahmin who figured as a poet and publisher in Paris literary circles before committing suicide in 1929, at the age of thirty-one; "The Duke of Deception" described, as best it could, Wolff's father, an elusive, dandified, debt-ridden con man. With his father, the personal tone was unavoidable. With O'Hara, it sometimes comes off as pushy and presumptuous:

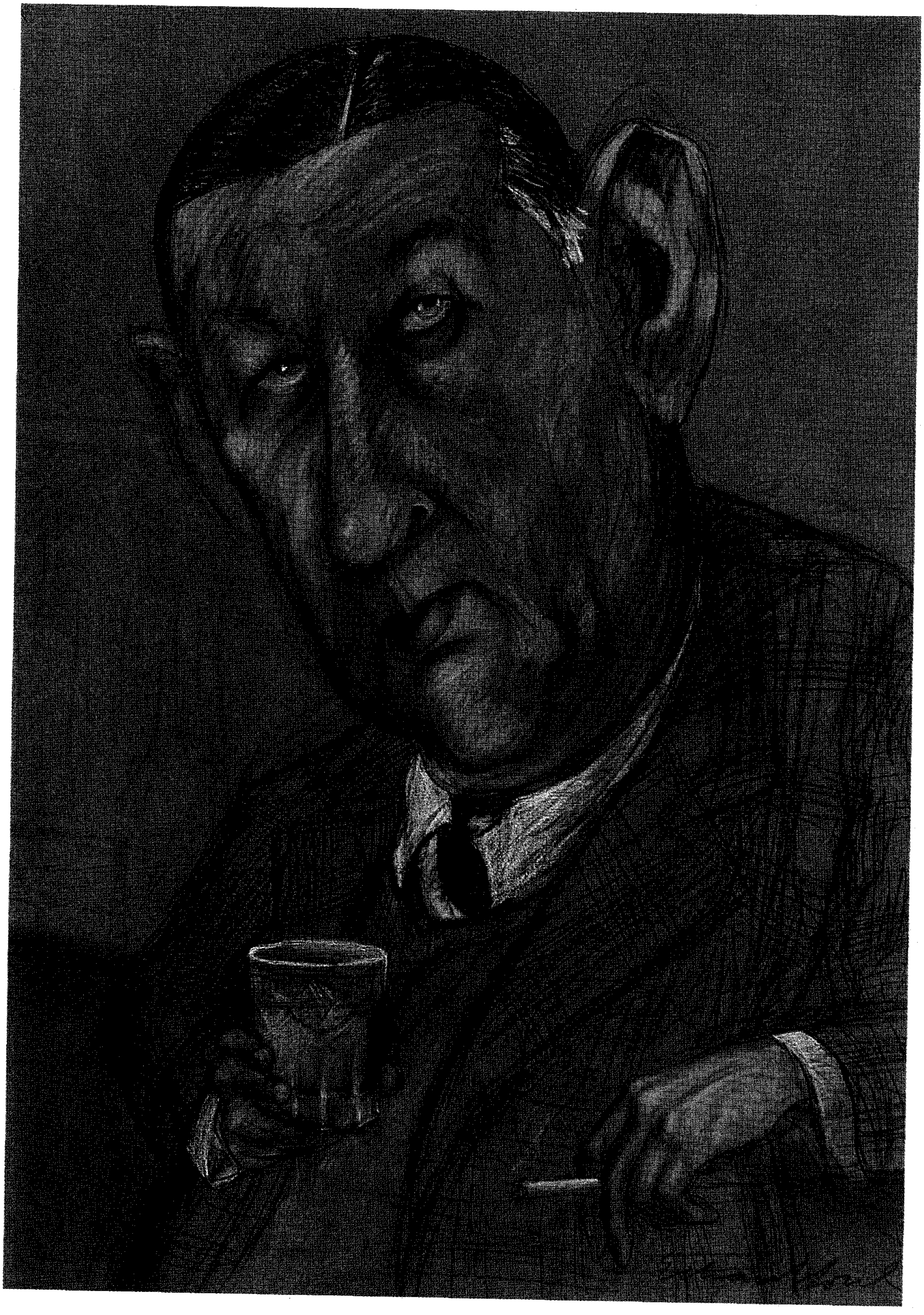
> Oh, was Dr. O'Hara cross when his son came home with his skeptical airs and a pink slip! Well, if Fordham wasn't a sufficient social and intellectual challenge for his exacting Johnny-boy, how about Keystone Normal School (say what?) in Kutztown, midway between Allentown and Reading in Mennonite country, where the flappers and philosophers journeyed downtown by horse and buggy, wearing black suits and ankle-length bulletproof skirts.

When O'Hara, late in a well-lubricated evening with the Brendan Gills, emerged from his bedroom wearing full cowboy regalia, the Gills laughed, but Wolff fumes, " 'Cowboy-crazy' after all! And how predictably silly was O'Hara's bristling fury! So why is it that my sympathy—indeed a feeling of full-hearted fraternity—is drawn to the ridiculous yob with the big, boozy face?" The trouble with such generously bestowed fraternity is that O'Hara wasn't only, or even primarily, a ridiculous yob; he was a sensitive and productive literary artist, with some alcohol and anger problems. Unlike Harry Crosby and Duke Wolff, he did not ruinously mismanage his life. He was too cantankerous and late-rising to hold a job for long, but this was a mercy in disguise; it kept him at what he did best, freelance writing. He flirted with, but never succumbed to, professional disaster, producing his pages through many a hangover, and giving up alcohol at the point where it might have killed him.

He did not win the Nobel Prize he hankered for, but he was not a loser. He was an Irish-Catholic prep-school dropout from the Pennsylvania coal regions; cast from the comfortable middle class by the death of his father, an admired doctor, at the age of fifty-seven, he became one of the best and richest writers of his time,

EDWARD SOREL

How did a man so coarse and dislikable and so self-defeatingly defensive and overeager manage to write so well, with such empathy and delicacy?



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a time overshadowed by Hemingway, Faulkner, and Fitzgerald. It is true that, especially before his second marriage, in 1937, to Belle Wylie, O'Hara acquired the reputation, through numerous accumulated anecdotes, of a very nasty drunk, capable of physically assaulting not only women ("Although I may often have felt like belting a woman," he pleaded in extenuation, "I have never actually taken a poke at one except in anger") but a dwarf, in a well-witnessed incident at "21." In Hollywood, just before falling in love with Belle, O'Hara behaved badly enough at a party to call Robert Benchley, whom he had taken a swing at, the next morning to apologize. The mild-mannered Benchley responded, "For what, John? . . . You're a shit and everybody knows you're a shit, and people ask you out in spite of it. It's nothing to apologize about." But to this same untethered, roistering period belong his first and best novel, "Appointment in Samarra," and many of his finest stories, nurtured on the very binges and grudges that fuelled his misbehavior. Bars were a venue of research for him, and resentment an instrument of social analysis.

Wolff as a biographer is drawn to personality puzzles: his father and Harry Crosby were gifted men who went bad; O'Hara poses a reverse puzzle. How did a man so coarse and dislikable and, in social matters, so self-defeatingly defensive and overeager manage to write so well, with such empathy and delicacy? Specifically, how did O'Hara, despite Harold Ross's personal dislike of him, manage to sell so many stories (a record number, in the end) to *The New Yorker*? His contributions appeared early in the magazine's existence and were copiously revived in 1960, after an eleven-year break wrought by O'Hara in the wake of Brendan Gill's sardonic review of "A Rage to Live." Wolff does not, it seemed to me, get *The New Yorker* exactly right. It is not true, as he asserts, that John Cheever's "The Swimmer" was "so abundant in its deliberate improbabilities and dislocations that it had to be published by *Playboy*." *The New Yorker* published it, in July of 1964. Nor is it the case that "very short pieces" were "what the magazine called 'casuals.' " Strange to say, *any* piece of fiction, however extended and ambitious, was called a casual. More important, Wolff, drawing upon *New Yorker* archives deposited in the New York Pub-

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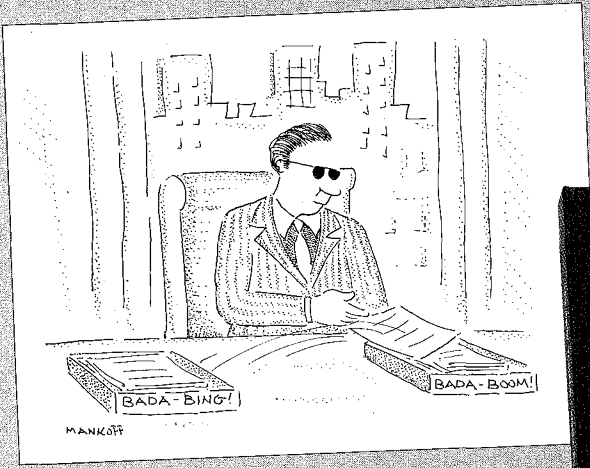
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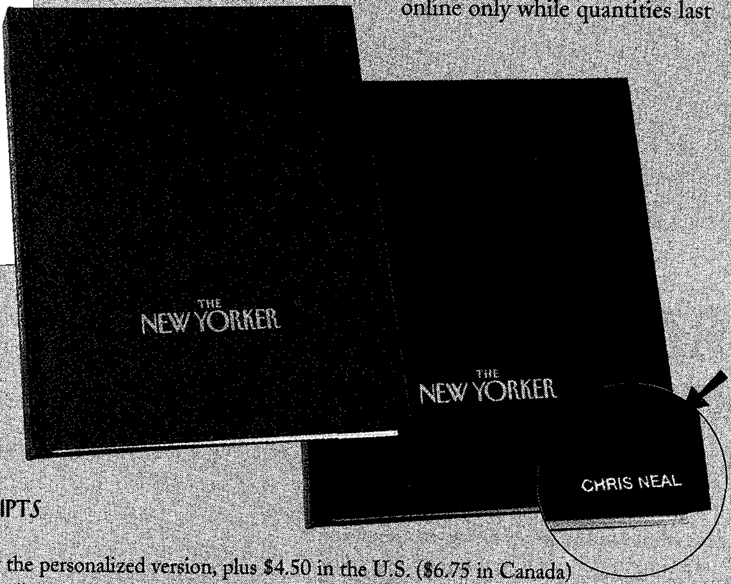
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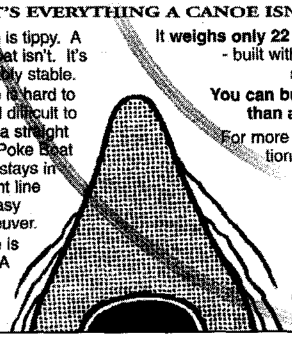

lic Library, accuses O'Hara's longtime editorial champion, Katharine White, of condescension, nitpicking, prudery, and even of wanting to knock his word rate, elevated by Ross to a dime, down to nine cents. An editor and a writer will have differences, but I think Wolff, borrowing prickliness from his subject, reads too much into Mrs. White's polite cavils and "long-faced" rejections "expressed with regretful and self-justifying delicacy." He finds that a sketch of O'Hara she wrote for her archive at Bryn Mawr (oh, those poisonous archives!) reveals an "essential disdain" achieved from a "vantage . . . always from on high, looking down." Against her claim that she and Ross "coddled" O'Hara, Wolff argues that "the record" shows the writer "dismissed, mocked, scolded, and almost always patronized." Well, the record also shows that *The New Yorker* published most of the O'Hara still worth reading, and that up to his break with it in 1949 he repeatedly took refuge in its pages, after bruising encounters with the Hollywood script mills and the reviewers of his novels.

Anyone who reads, in O'Hara's "Selected Letters," the run beginning "Dear Mrs. Angell" (before she became Mrs. White) and mounting to such friendly salutations as "Dear Katharine" and even "Dear Kate," gets a different impression, of a brisk and hopeful editorial relationship, long on business and short on extraneous courtesies. Bruccoli's biography reports, "Mrs. Angell regarded O'Hara as 'a lovable man.' " She told Bruccoli in an interview, "John O'Hara cared about people and was essentially a kind man and a real friend, which few egotists are." Any healthy relationship is based on mutual advantage; in this case, the editor needs something to publish and the writer needs a buyer. O'Hara needed *The New Yorker*, for its prestige as much as for its modest pay, enough to ride out editorial friction; Wolff rather ingenuously marvels that O'Hara "never seemed fully to recognize [Ross's] antipathy." To have recognized the antipathy would not have served his purpose. Persevere, rather. Wolff acknowledges that "it was no small thanks to Katharine Angell and others with influence that he surmounted the high barrier of the boss editor's distaste."

Mrs. White once confided to this reviewer a sidelight on the famous break, which had less to do with Gill's panning than with O'Hara's demand, which Wolff describes, that the magazine pay him a two-hundred-and-fifty-dollar kill fee for each story submitted and returned. This impossible demand, Mrs. White told me, had reasoning behind it: O'Hara felt that *New Yorker* short stories were so specialized, so subtle and slight, that a writer could not sell elsewhere a story written with its pages in mind. (In a letter to his other editor, William Maxwell, in 1939, he said, "I write it so that The New Yorker will buy it. It won't go anywhere else.") It seems undeniable that his penchant for brand-name-dropping and for run-on dialogue was beneficially curbed by this one magazine's scope; the small bottle improved the wine. Perhaps only an editorial policy determined to capture "the real thing" (a phrase of William Shawn's as well as of Henry James's) with "casuals" light on contrivance and melodrama would have embraced stories as wryly minimal, as poemlike in their deceptively uninflected realism, as O'Hara's.

In the course of tracing his subject's fortunes, Geoffrey Wolff imparts plenty of his own views on writing. Frequently, he resorts to an expansive first-person singular; e.g., "Writing these words, I feel more than a little discomfort about subverting my conviction that a novelist is bound to honor only what provokes his or her interest. To hold that a writer owes the reader a damned thing (and vice versa) . . . is to traffic in Hallmark sentiment, to make a plea for moral fiction, for allegory, for vulgarity." Literary matters excite him to some fearful syntactical contortions:

> What happened to O'Hara in Pottsville during those dark months in 1930 of soul-scouring can't be specified, but it's reasonable to guess that he sounded a kind of abyss. Writers—or anyone who has suffered the flu—will recognize that odd state he must have entered, a numb reverie not unlike the fevered sweats Keats endured from consumption, and an extraordinary out-of-himself (gussied up in Keats's case as selfless "poetical character . . . not itself, everything and nothing," having "no Identity," continually "filling some other Body")* physiologically congruent with the creative state.

The asterisk directs us to the footnote "To Richard Woodhouse, October 27, 1818." Wolff's other biographies were composed with a certain taut incisiveness; this one, especially in the second half, relaxes into colloquial asides, parentheses, and proliferating footnotes. Like a writing instructor with the end of term in sight,

LILACS IN SEPTEMBER

Shocked to the root
like the lilac bush
in the vacant lot
by the hurricane—

whose black branch split
by wind or rain
has broken out
unseasonably

into these scant ash-
colored blossoms
lifted high
as if to say

to passersby
What will unleash
itself in you
when your storm comes?

—*Katha Pollitt*

dishevelled and chatty, he confidentially shares insider dope. Of rejection: "Writers never forget that particular pain, a stab of shame that something tended and tendered has been repulsed." Of finishing up: "It is difficult to overstate the retrospective euphoria that coherent work, however painful or shaming the story being told, can confer on a writer." Of revision: "There's always in the writing of a novel the difficulty of ongoing revision, of amending on page two hundred of a manuscript a detail that creates a trickle-back adjustment to myriad tributary passages upstream." Of submission: "This is not an unusual response—postcoital tristesse, postpartum blues—for the surrender of a book to an editor." Of ruthless ego: "Whatever decency a writer salvages from his personal history, moral punctilio, bushido, or common consideration is incidental to a writer's essential selfishness." Of characters: "Fiction writers are in the business of cornering their characters. Their work lives by the principle of obstacle and resistance, its heat issuing from friction." These aperçus are well turned and keenly felt, but the reader suspects that they tell us more about the cogitations and travails of Geoffrey Wolff than about those of "a natural writer," as O'Hara described himself in the exuberant foreword to his 1961 collection "Assembly." William Shawn, no gossip, once allowed to me, in his murmurous but undeniable way, that O'Hara was "not very self-critical."

His long novels were typeset from first drafts belted out on his typewriter in the wee hours of the morning. He bragged to Lucius Beebe that his short stories for *The New Yorker* never took him more than two hours to write. Mrs. White winced when the hurry showed, lamenting, "I really do think you are a first-rate writer and only suffer from haste or something." She took a stab at the "something" by saying, of a rejected story, "It now seems as if the writer didn't care, had no emotion about the whole thing." But O'Hara was a reluctant reviser, unable to enrich material that already seemed to him self-evidently rich. The *premier coup* speed and flatness, of course, is what makes the best of O'Hara so unnerving: the stories, so lightly, declaratively engraved on their plain surfaces, open on depths that swallow us. Wolff may be right in suggesting that the formative minds of *The New Yorker* could not quite place O'Hara. Wolcott Gibbs, a fellow-drinker who managed the difficult trick of a long friendship with the pugnacious author, in the introduction to O'Hara's collection "Pipe Night" wrote that "his range

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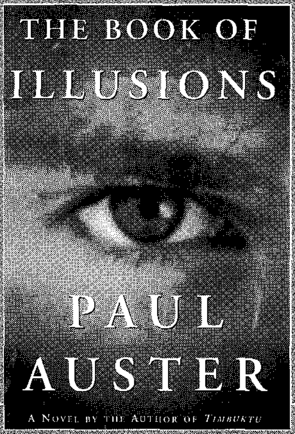

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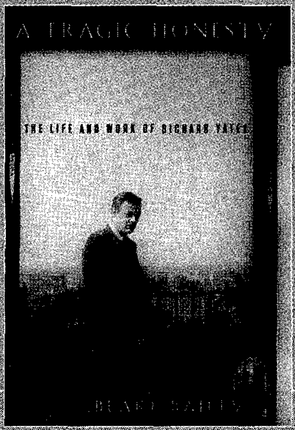

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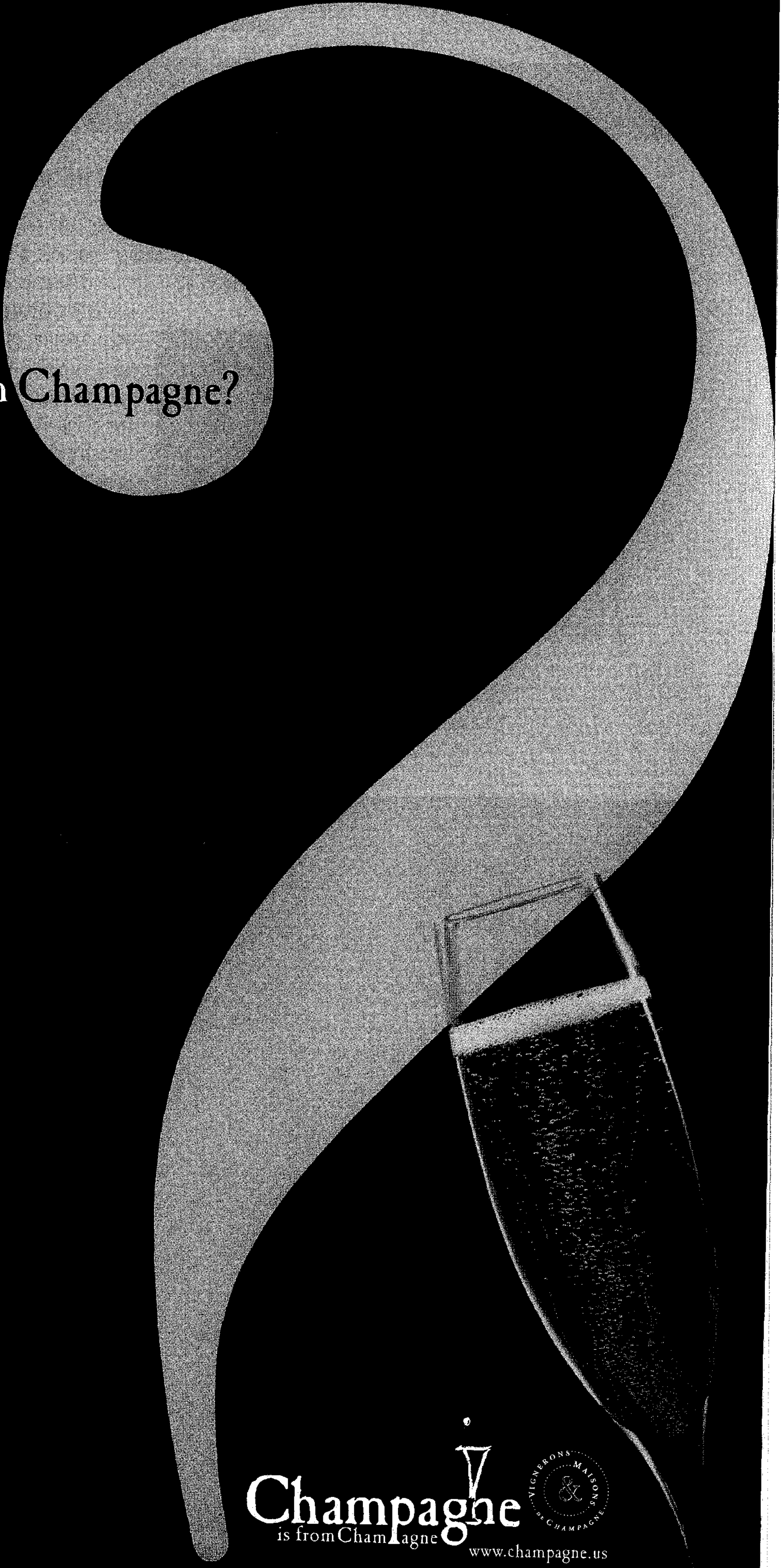
of subject and treatment is too great for an editorial mind accustomed to writers, generally speaking, as rigidly typed as the seals in the circus." O'Hara's being "equally at home in all these worlds" is an "inexplicable gift" to "a man [Gibbs] who has never really grasped any social system more intricate than the one obtaining at the Riverdale Country School." *The New Yorker* of those years, jealously staking out its turf in the morass of American culture, did not encourage its contributors to venture beyond the magazine; O'Hara's raw and roaming ambition, as well as his gruff manners, lifted Eustace Tilley's eyebrow. Gibbs's collection "A Season in the Sun and Other Pleasures" (1946), dedicated to O'Hara and almost entirely pre-published in *The New Yorker*, depicts the lazy, boozy, sun-soaked Long Island beach life the two men enjoyed; one story, "Love, Love, Love," contains a character, the autobiographical George Crane's friend Mark Anderson, whom I take to be, in part, O'Hara. My suspicions are strengthened by a hidden clue: Gibbs's story alludes to a malapropism, "crypty" (for "cryptic"), that O'Hara coined as the climax of his story "I Could Have Had a Yacht." Anderson is described as amiable, with a reservation:

> Lately, however, there had been a distinct feeling of strain and a kind of spiritual absence, as if he were turning weighty problems over in his mind. At first, Mr. Crane had put this down to literary abstraction, for Mr. Anderson was a writer, the author of two novels having to do with mild sexual confusion in fashionable circles. . . . At the moment, he was living on the proceeds from his second book, *Penelope*, the story of a constant but relentlessly talkative wife, which had been sold to the movies. Mr. Crane now decided that there was nothing in his friend's career that could warrant the deep and apparently permanent depression into which he seemed plunged. Even if he was planning a sequel to *Penelope*, his writing required no dark and anxious searching of the soul; all it needed was a typewriter and sufficient energy to manipulate it.

This is fiction, but it has, for me, the clang of truth, one intelligent writer's sneer at another, a typist with energy. The conundrum "How did this rough beast, at his best, write so well?" remains. "A Respectable Place," the final story in the Modern Library "Selected Short Stories of John O'Hara," to which Lionel Trilling wrote the introduction, never fails to stun me as it briskly shows how a neighborhood bar, maintained by its owner, Matty Wall, as "a respectable place," is destroyed by a corrupt civic establishment, chiefly the police force, because a drunken cop shot up the place and Matty accepted the offered restitution. The little conversational steps whereby unanswerable injustice is achieved have the beauty of a dance, down to the last pirouette, in which Matty Wall stands all drinks on the house: "This was strictly against the law, but Matty knew he wasn't going to open up again." In the introduction, published in 1956, before O'Hara had befouled his reputation with too many best-selling big novels, Trilling likens him to Kafka, in his "imagination of society as some strange sentient organism which acts by laws of its own being which are not to be understood; one does not know what will set into motion its dull implacable hostility, some small thing, not very wrong, not wrong at all; once it begins to move, no one can stand against it." The comparison might be extended to the observation that, though Herrmann Kafka and Dr. Patrick O'Hara were impressive in different ways, both left haunting, unappeasable images in their sons' imaginations.

And yet the ultimate units of society, the human individuals lost within the crushing agglomeration of hostility, rivalry, snobbery, exclusion, and defeat that O'Hara felt in his bones, have aspirations and hopes and passions, and can be regarded with tenderness by a writer whose bleak and swift style seems at first not to care. A small story from "Files on Parade" (1939) titled "By Way of Yonkers" sticks in my mind as especially moving. Its two principals, the young woman unnamed and the man named only in the last sentence, exist on the lower levels of Depression survival. She, with her gunmetal stockings and Cossack hat and "neat, short nose with jigsaw nostrils," seems to be a hooker. She arrives at the man's shabby apartment so late that he tells her she must have come by way of Yonkers, and when he asks "How'd you do?" of the engagement that delayed her she not quite evades the question:

> "Oh—" she said it very high. Then: "All right. Financially. But do we have to talk about it? You and me?"



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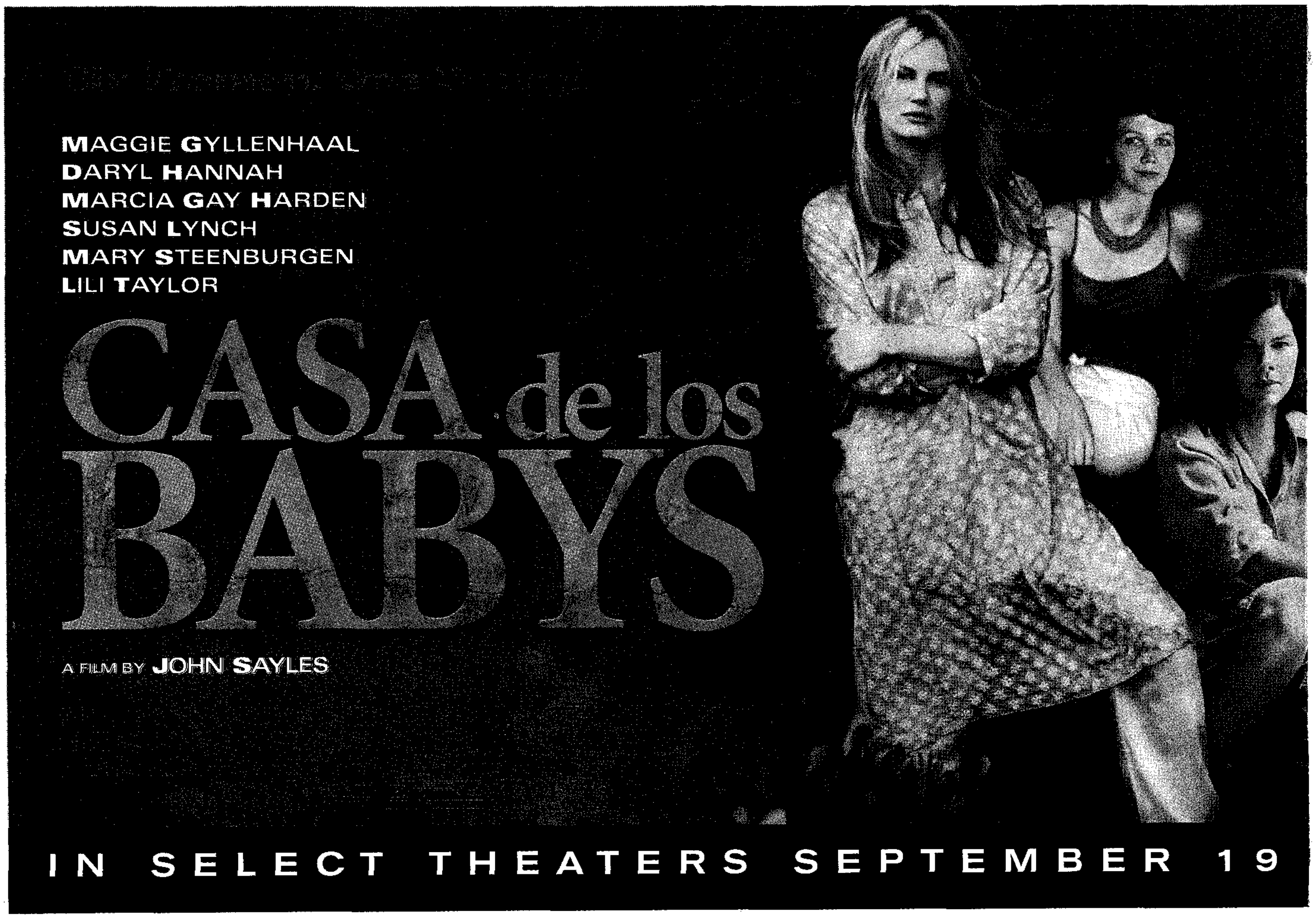
A CINEMATIC CONCEPTION

JOHN SAYLES ON THE MAKING OF "CASA DE LOS BABYS"

Photos courtesy of IFC Films

Writer and director John Sayles is a master at rendering indelible snapshots of life in all of its many shades and subtleties. From the grim reality of a West Virginia mine in "Matewan" and the complex urban tapestry of "City of Hope" to the loopy satire of "Brother from Another Planet," Sayles has consistently championed the disenfranchised and revealed his keen empathy for their everyday concerns. In his new film, "Casa de los Babys," Sayles confronts the often agonizing twists and turns of adopting a baby and, in the process, he explores the utter randomness of life in general.

As more American women defer childbirth until later in life, adoption and issues of fertility have become more prominent than ever before, a phenomenon Sayles began noticing among his own friends and family. "Casa de los Babys" follows the fates of six American women who are anxiously awaiting word on their respective adoptions in an unnamed South American country. "Their very personal feelings of failure and anger at not being able to conceive, combined with their frustration for this kind of complex situation always interests me," notes Sayles.

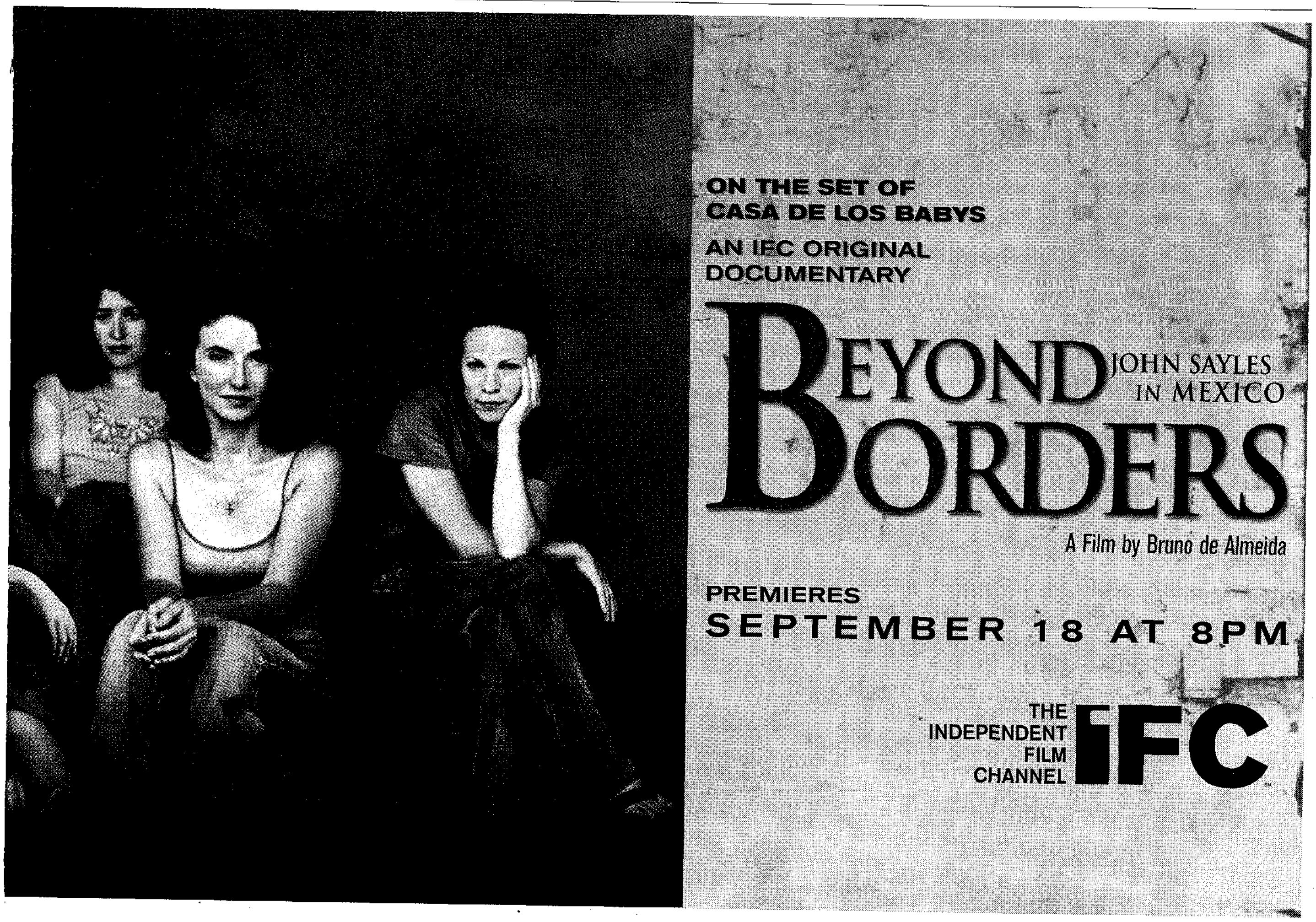

Six Women. One Dream.
MAGGIE GYLLENHAAL
DARYL HANNAH
MARCIA GAY HARDEN
SUSAN LYNCH
MARY STEENBURGEN
LILI TAYLOR
CASA de los BABYS
A FILM BY JOHN SAYLES
IN SELECT THEATERS SEPTEMBER 19

Intrigued by the labyrinthine process of adoption and also by its randomness—a tantalizing interplay of files and fates—Sayles was inspired to depict the process cinematically. "My central image for the film was a group of mothers, each with her own well-developed lifestyles, opinions, and emotional baggage. They wait on folding chairs on one side of a wall, and a roomful of babies with nothing much more than a need to be picked up and fed wait on the other side. In between is a bureaucrat going "eenie, meenie, miney, moe" arbitrarily pairing off these human beings for relationships that will last at least fifteen or twenty years." The myriad possibilities for these pairings hang in the balance as the future mothers "labor" away days, weeks, and months in anticipation.

Indeed, the instant of adoption, a moment pregnant with meaning, fascinated Sayles. "One of the most strikingly dramatic things about adoption for me is the suddenness of it," he observes. "The process of carrying a baby for nine months—having all those bodily changes and then the intensity of delivery—seems to lend a certain integrity to that child's existence. Whereas in adoption, who knows which child will become available and who knows when. Suddenly there's a phone call from a bureaucrat and you're a parent." This is the existential process that "Casa de los Babys" attempts to capture.

Essential to the film's conception was Sayles' commitment to creating challenging work for women actors. The ensemble cast features Maggie Gyllenhaal, Daryl Hannah, Marcia Gay Harden, Susan Lynch, Lili Taylor, Mary Steenburgen, and Rita Moreno. "We have a lot of terrific actresses in this country. They only need to be given something interesting to do," says Sayles.

"Casa de los Babys" opens in select theaters September 19.



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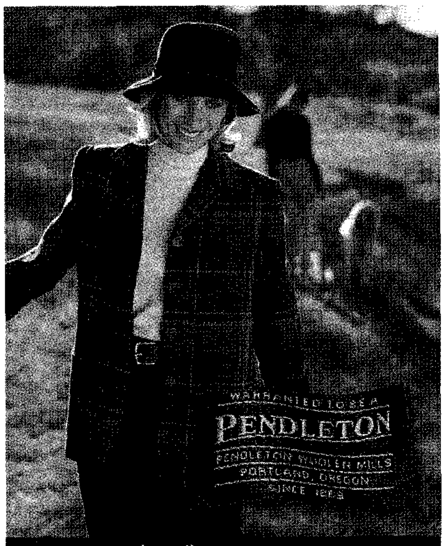
She talks instead about her fading appetite for liquor, and the expense of dental care. He, lying inert and fully dressed on his bed, talks of being broke, of not wanting to take money from her, of how he can't seem "to make a connection in this town." The town is New York, and he is a minor gangster thrown out of work by the repeal of Prohibition. But he has met a man who offered him a connection in Milwaukee, and he is going to go there for a long time. The concluding words are unspectacular and unexpectedly sweeping:

> [She asks,] "Any chance you being back in town soon?"
>
> "Well, not right away, honey. First I have to build up my connection again."
>
> "Well, I don't have to tell you, I'm glad for you. It's about time you got a good break." She resumed rubbing his ankle. He put his hand on the top of her head.
>
> "Yeah? You're as good a break as I ever got."
>
> "Ah, Christ, Bill," she said, and fell face down in tears.

One is moved not only by their plight of presumably eternal separation but by the dignity that O'Hara, in a literary time of programmatic pro-proletarian advocacy (Odets and Steinbeck and Mike Gold), instinctively brings to his two specimens of lowlife. He does not view them politically, from above; he is there in the room with them, and one is moved by the unspoken presence of an author so knowing, so unjudgmental, so nearly an outcast himself.

Wolff, unlike O'Hara's other biographers, shortcuts the four exhaustingly circumstantial, commercially successful, and sometimes prize-winning later novels in one chapter, "The Tomes." He complains of their prolixity, their reliance on characters' suicides, their "leering tropism for the border dividing sex from violence," their tendency "to dash expository cold water on a character's fevered exclamations from narrative ambush," and their breakdown "in voice, pacing, proportion, energy of character, psychological credibility, and moral vision." He even quotes again, approvingly this time around, from Gill's "Rage to Live" review—which ends, we should remember, with the inverted compliment "It is because of O'Hara's distinction that his failure here seems in the same nature of a catastrophe."

Wolff's first chapter, "The Region," interestingly dwells on the advantages of Pottsville for a would-be writer. A shadow of itself now—"sooty, grim, and used-up," Wolff writes, and quotes a 1984 article in the Philadelphia *Inquirer* that quipped, "Even the parking meters look cold and penniless"—Pottsville still teemed during O'Hara's youth. With an ethnic diversity including Pennsylvania-Dutch farmers, Irish and Welsh coal miners, Lithuanians, Hungarians, Swedes, and the predominantly Anglo-Saxon, Protestant aristocracy of bankers and managers thriving on the anthracite industry, the town was a treasury of class distinctions and yet small enough, at around twenty-five thousand, so that everybody rubbed elbows. A doctor and his eldest son sampled this society at every stratum, and the odd democracy of Prohibition mingled gangsters and molls with the country-club set, of which the O'Haras, though Irish, were dancing, horse-riding members. Dr. O'Hara's early death and unthrifty estate management, it might be said, extended John's social education, through his jobs in local journalism, to much more eventual profit than admission to the young man's envisioned paradise of Yale and its clubs would have. Even in the bitter taste its provincial meanness left in his mouth, Pottsville—where some remembered John O'Hara as "a bum" who "told a lot of lies about this town"—was a good environment for a writer to come from, which is not to say that a writer had to emerge. There are many more places than writers to immortalize them, and other national literary figures to hail from the Schuylkill valley, such as Conrad Richter and Wallace Stevens, sublimated their experience of these gritty environs into a much hazier lyricism. A talent like O'Hara's is multiply determined, and jiggling the multiples will be an attractive challenge as long as a writer has readers. We want to revisit and understand the pleasure we have been given. "Good writers deserve to be remembered," Wolff was told by William Maxwell, who of *New Yorker* personnel receives the biographer's best review, for editing O'Hara for years without undue contention and for responding to Wolff's inquiries by typing his cogent answers on the spot. In "The Art of Burning Bridges" (a title, like much of the text, a touch over the top), a biography is imbued with not just curiosity and memorial admiration but an invigorating sense of rivalry and, across the years, comradeship. ♦



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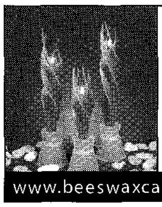

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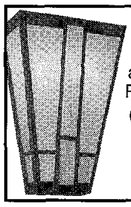

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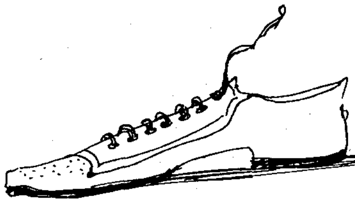
BRIEFLY NOTED

American Woman, *by Susan Choi (HarperCollins; $24.95).* Set in 1974, Choi's second novel follows the outlines of the Patty Hearst kidnapping, taking as its heroine one of the minor players in the drama. Jenny Shimada, who once bombed government buildings, has been living underground for two years when the kidnapping occurs. From three thousand miles away in the Hudson Valley, she follows the story obsessively: the cadre's wild demands; the victim's apparent conversion to the cause; the police siege in which most of the group burns to death. What she doesn't suspect is that she will soon be chaperoning the surviving fugitives in a Catskills farmhouse as they attempt to write their memoirs, a money-making scheme cooked up by a former comrade. Jenny's charges prove to be far more than she can handle, and things go comically, horrifically awry. The novel takes a hard-eyed look at American idealism, and yet its imaginative abundance, its fascination with self-invention, and its portrayal of the landscape as a living, breathing presence provide a quintessentially American sense of possibility.

Shipwreck, *by Louis Begley (Knopf; $23).* A happily middle-aged novelist of some repute wakes up one morning, decides his work is worthless (oh, those writers!), and immediately becomes embroiled with a young Frenchwoman who turns out to be both phenomenally demanding and, as things spiral downward, exceedingly difficult to shake. Havoc ensues—wild messages left on answering machines, illicit trysts in the Vineyard, a possible cooling off of his rich wife's affection. This predictable, curiously prurient tale—Begley's athletic bedroom scenes seem not so much experienced by the narrator as peered at by the reader—is dished up, over many hours, to an anonymous listener in a bar, apparently as a kind of Ancient Mariner Blue Plate special.

Saul and Patsy, *by Charles Baxter (Pantheon; $24).* It is rare that a novel, even a good one, manages to evoke contemporary life without being self-conscious about it. But that is what Baxter achieves here in his portrait of a recently married couple—neurotic, cantankerous Saul Bernstein, who has taken a job teaching high school in rural Michigan, and his wife, Patsy, who does her best to steady him. Saul rages at one point, "If you put a Vermeer on television, it stopped being a Vermeer and turned into something else on television." Baxter's painterly technique reverses this process: moments that in other hands would be merely sensational (one of Saul's remedial students shoots himself on Saul's lawn) here assume their rightful place in the continuum of a young couple's experience and inexperience.

Where I Was From, *by Joan Didion (Knopf; $23).* For four decades, Didion has written in masterly fashion about the contradictions of California culture. In this book, she casts an arctic eye on recent phenomena—the Rodney King riots, the Spur Posse—and on her own upbringing in the Sacramento area. Her great-great-grandparents "crossed" to California in the eighteen-hundreds, and she was brought up on wistful recollections of the past. Her family lived in dark houses, ate with tarnished silver, dressed her in "an eccentric amount of black," and prized anything that was "old." Along with a recipe for India relish and a green-and-red calico appliqué, she inherited a view that California had been spoiled. And yet "the logical extension of this thought, that we were the people who had spoiled it, remained unexplored." Addressing her own confusion about the place, she identifies the settler imperative—"the past could be jettisoned, children buried and parents left behind"—in the fact that her birthplace is now "a hologram that dematerializes as I drive through it."



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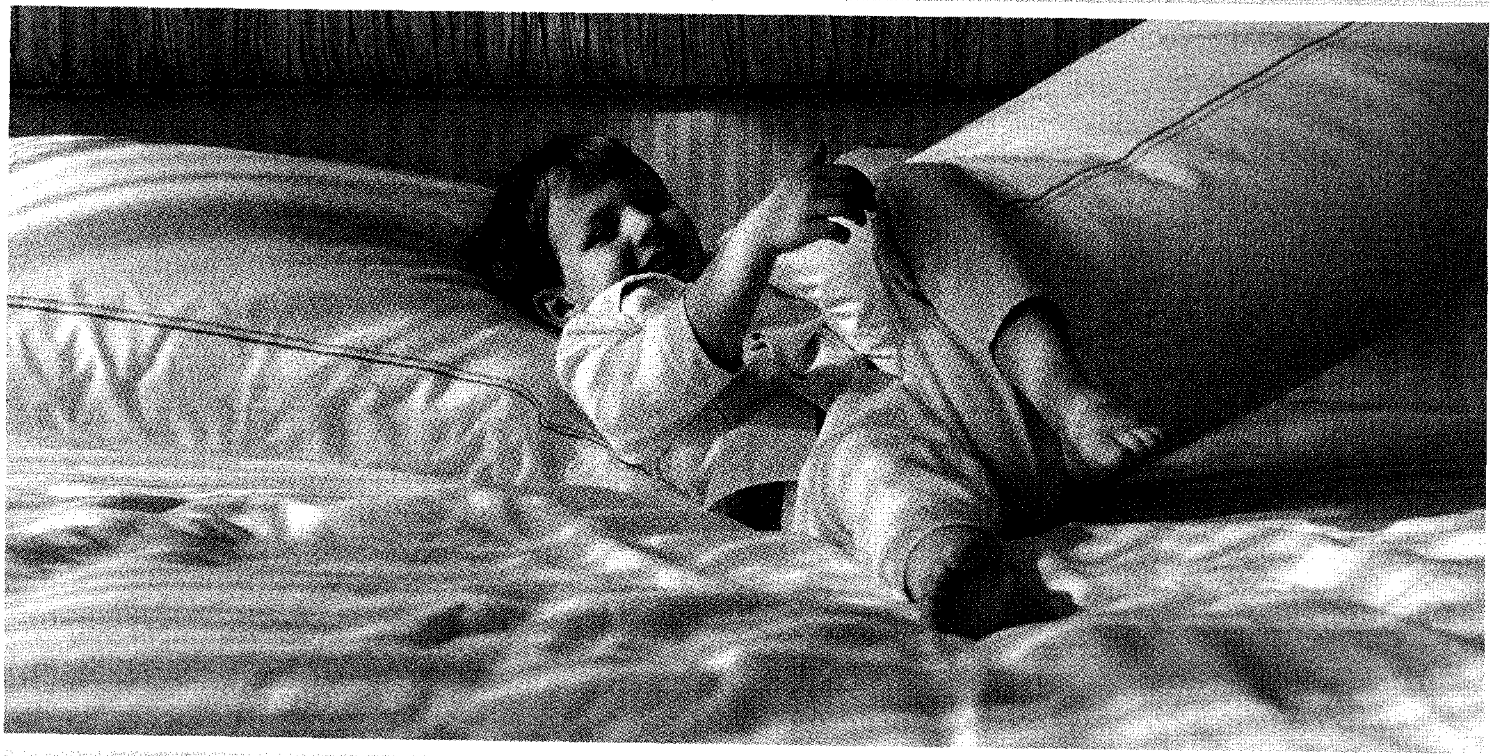

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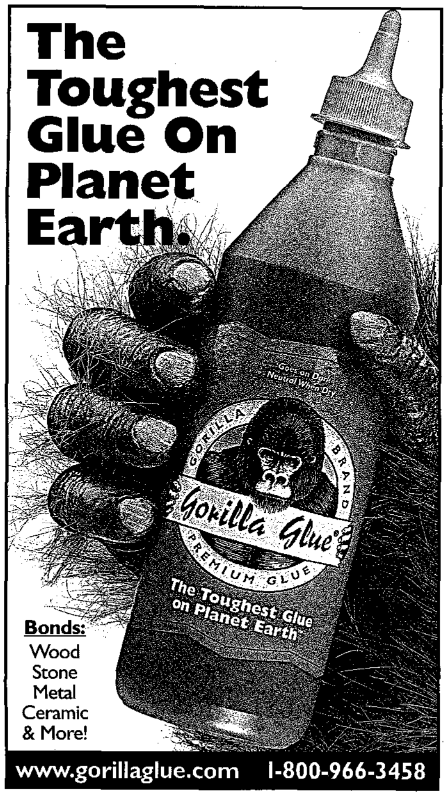
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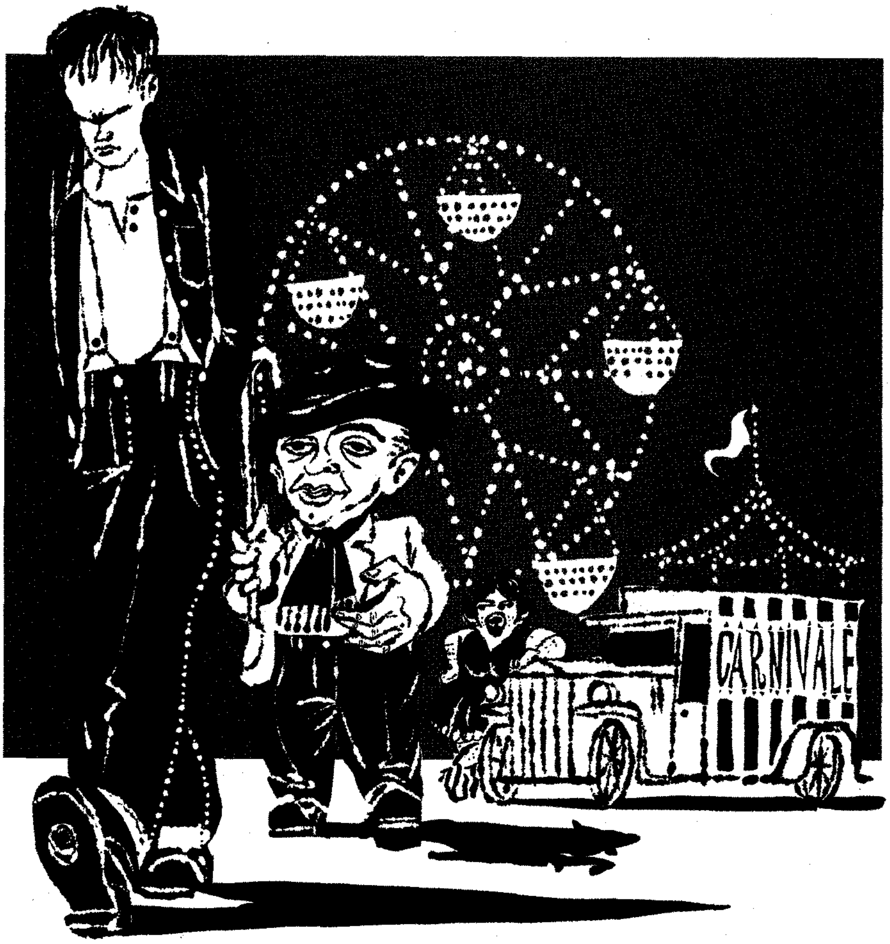
HEARTLAND OF DARKNESS

The Devil and the Dust Bowl.

BY NANCY FRANKLIN



You pays your money and you takes your chances with HBO's "Carnivàle."

All summer, HBO hawked its new series "Carnivàle" (which began September 14th and continues for eleven more Sundays) with an endlessly repeated promo that featured a voice saying, "To each generation is born a creature of light and a creature of darkness." I'd hear this and I'd think, Please—I'm *busy*. The combination of orotundity and grade-school theology was a turnoff. But, at the same time, the images in the promos—dusty, washed-out shots of a travelling carnival in the thirties—promised both authenticity and utter strangeness, and fixed themselves in your mind (especially if in recent years your mind has become attuned, by the performances of Ricky Jay, to the weird wonderfulness of con artists and carnival tricks).

The quote from the promo comes from a speech given by the first character we see onscreen in the first episode, a man called Samson, who runs the carnival at the center of the show. In Biblical cadences, he tells us about a time when there was magic in the world, as well as "nobility and unimaginable cruelty." The montage that accompanies the opening credits illustrates the time period in which "Carnivàle" is set: we zoom through a three-dimensional rendering of Michelangelo's "The Damned," into images of soup kitchens, of a farmer picking up a handful of useless soil, and of Mussolini, Stalin, Roosevelt, and Babe Ruth, interspersed with tarot cards

EDWIN FOTHERINGHAM

and other paintings showing the roil of war and human struggle. At the end of his speech, Samson refers to the "false sun" that exploded over Trinity—the site of the first atomic-bomb test, in the New Mexico desert, in 1945—at which time, he says, "man forever traded away wonder for reason." That event certainly did change the world, but the speech is mumbo-jumbo, even on the show's own terms, and (with the exception of a couple of discussions about Babe Ruth's closing in on seven hundred career homers) nothing in the first three episodes connects the insular universe of the carnival as it travels through Oklahoma in 1934 to events in the larger world, or to the looming possibility of nuclear devastation, or even to any of the economic forces at work at that time, except one scene in which a man's house is bulldozed by the bank that has taken over his property.

Daniel Knauf, who created the series and is one of its executive producers, said, in an interview for HBO's Web site, that the nature of "Carnivàle" is hard to communicate: "How do you describe this show? I guess the flip answer is, it's 'The Grapes of Wrath' meets David Lynch." That's also the serious answer. The show doesn't stint on the dirty workaday reality of carnival life or on the desolation the troupe finds in the towns it passes through, and the Lynch connection will occur to viewers, too, as soon as they see Samson, who is played by Michael J. Anderson—the memorable dancing dwarf of "Twin Peaks." Lynch's influence is also evident in the thick overlay of dreamlike coincidence and in the ominous atmosphere that characterizes much of "Carnivàle," the former quality making it somewhat tedious to watch and the latter tantalizing. One is tempted to applaud a show merely for departing from the formula of making sense every second, but too often the plot convergences of "Carnivàle" feel not artful but arbitrary.

One of the main characters, Ben Hawkins (Nick Stahl), a young man who reluctantly joins up with the carnival as a way of escaping the police (an unexplained chain sticks out from the bottom of his pants leg), has healing powers, a gift with ambiguous consequences. As an old woman tells him, "There's rules, boy. You give life, you gotta take it from something else." In a chilling scene in the first episode, we see Ben in a field with a crippled little girl. He touches her legs, and as she races toward her house, able to run for the first time in her life, the crops beside her wither and die. Word of this miracle gets around, but Samson is indifferent to Ben's sudden fame—until he realizes, in the third episode, his potential value to the carnival. This is when we first begin to feel—and not just take it on HBO-loving faith—that the show is going somewhere, that character has something to do with plot, and it's not all just supernatural woo-woo with nothing really at stake.

Of all the actors in "Carnivàle," Anderson is perhaps the most compelling (though I keep staring at Tim DeKay, who plays Samson's right-hand man, waiting for him to turn to the camera and say, "Yes, I *do* know that I look and sound exactly like Joel McCrea"); his Samson is a well-rounded character—worldly, benevolent, and a little cynical. The other characters wear their mysteries on their sleeves, leaving little room for surprise, but when Samson, told by a local sheriff that the carnival can't set up in his town because the locals can't afford to be taken advantage of, has the bright idea of calling the show a revival and making Ben the star, you're genuinely taken aback—you didn't know Samson had that kind of deceit in him. And you appreciate him anew when you see how smoothly he cons the local minister. "We all come to the Lord when a young stranger wandered into our midst . . . Benjamin St. John," he says, in humble tones. Now the group travels from town to town, he elaborates, "bringing hope where there is none." And here you have your first reason to smile as you realize that Samson, while giving a thoroughly phony performance, is also telling the truth.

"Carnivàle"'s preoccupation with good and evil is, in fact, less simplistic than the promo would lead you to believe. They are seen as slippery concepts, subject to change, and present in some measure in everyone; as the preacher Brother Justin (Clancy Brown) says in the first episode, while talking to a migrant woman who has stolen money from the collection plate, "We all, each of us, carry within us the seeds of our own

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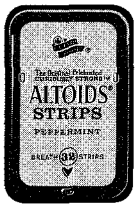

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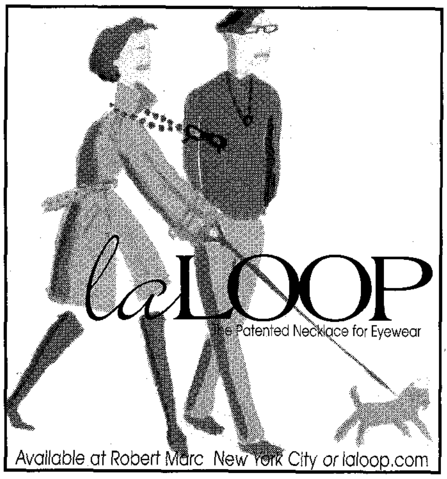
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salvation and our own damnation." Although I'm not automatically engaged by stories about getting or losing religion, the subject is ultimately put to some use in "Carnivàle," and not just presented as riveting in and of itself. The series has its spooky, fearful moments. It's also pictorially vivid throughout, taking you on a journey to another place and to another time, when people were blown about the country like dust on the wind. It's not a comfortable journey, but then it's not meant to be.

Most people who watch morning TV say that they don't really watch it: it's on in the background while they get ready for work—it's like listening to the radio. But if you're going to watch Ellen DeGeneres's new daily talk show, which started last week on NBC and airs at the fairly civilized hour of 10 A.M., you actually have to pay attention to the screen or you'll miss a lot of her charm—the deadpan face, the physical comedy, the perfect timing. Hosts on other morning shows project bloodcurdling good cheer and seem to have been coached on how to appear to have a sense of humor, but have they ever actually made you laugh? DeGeneres is such a natural, so good at what she does, you can't believe you get to watch her for free, five days a week.

For her first show, she paid an unscheduled visit to the studio commissary before the show aired and asked some men in work uniforms if she could sit down with them. She asked them what they did, and one said he was an elevator man. "We were just *in* the elevator!" she said, as if this made them practically related. "It was fantastic—I loved it!" She got him to call his wife to tell her to watch the première. His wife didn't catch what he said, so he repeated it. Ellen took the phone from him and said, as if she really meant business, "Donna? It's Ellen DeGeneres. I don't know why he has to tell you twice. It's easy. Watch 'The Ellen DeGeneres Show' September 8th." The show is relaxed and low key, and although DeGeneres made one unforced error—in a tired bit with an octogenarian cake decorator, she fooled around too much and was uncharacteristically manic—she has a warm rapport with her guests. You should watch the show. Don't make me tell you twice. ♦

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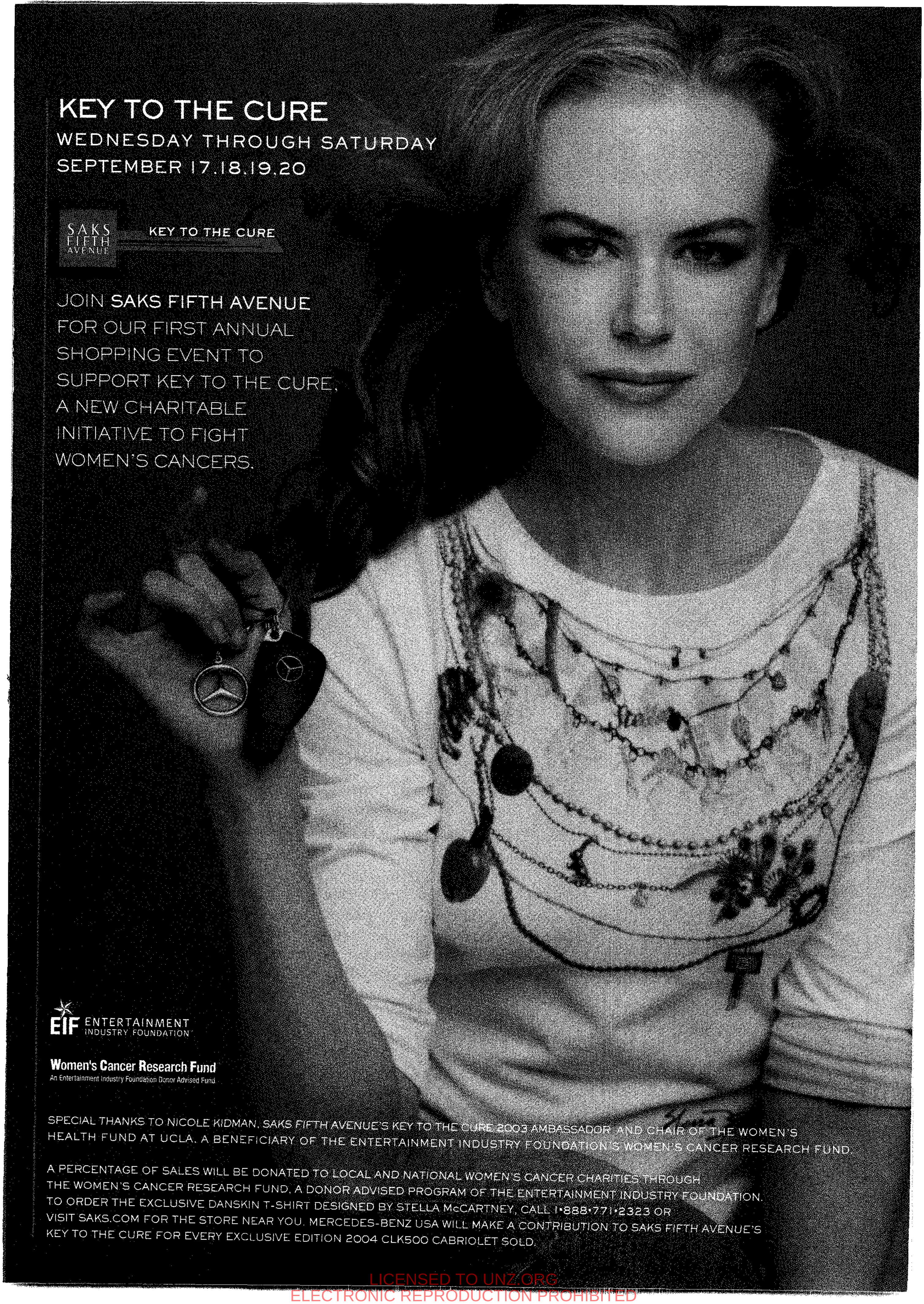

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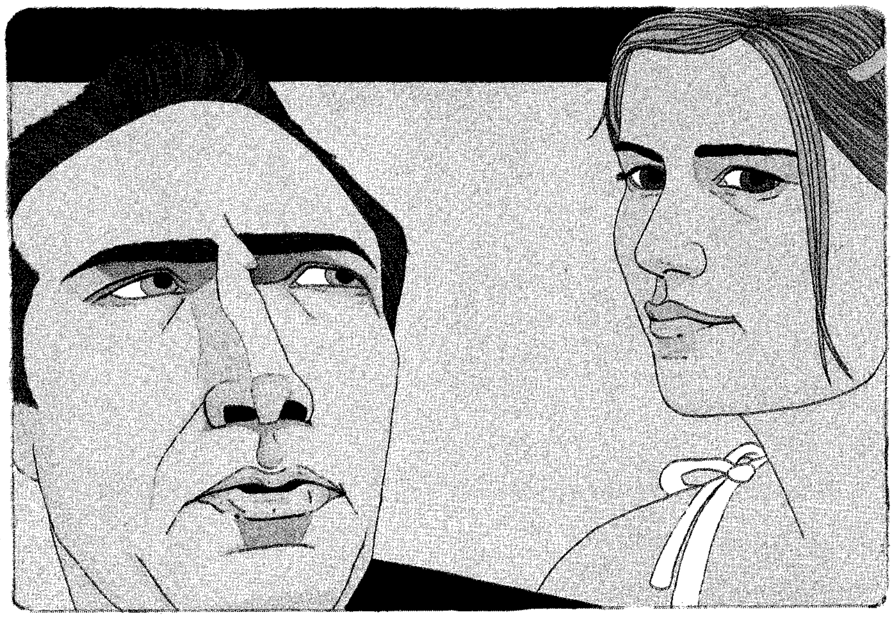
TEEN-AGERS IN PERIL

"Matchstick Men" and "In This World."

BY ANTHONY LANE

The first sound that we hear in "Matchstick Men" is the soft lapping of water. The credits slide onto the screen against waves of blue. All of which makes it most peculiar that, in the course of almost two hours, nobody gets wet. The water is pool water, and the pool shimmers in the back yard of Roy (Nicolas Cage), waiting for swimmers who never come. The film was shot in Southern California, the director is Ridley Scott, and these early scenes, with their hurtfully strong colors, remind us that, long before "Gladiator" and "Black Hawk Down," Scott was the bright boy from the North of England who found his way to art school. One way to take this new movie, perhaps, is to treat it as a tribute to David Hockney, a kid from a similar background, whose 1967 painting "A Bigger Splash" is itself one of the creamiest, most tensed-up tributes that an outsider has ever paid to California. Look at Roy's unpeopled yard, and you can be sure that Roy is aching for that splash.


Nicolas Cage and Alison Lohman in Ridley Scott's new movie.

LARA TOMLIN

By profession, he is a crook, ripping off gullible citizens with his partner, Frank (Sam Rockwell). By instinct, however, he is a fusspot. His criminal tendencies are parochial and guarded—"I don't do long cons," he says—but when it comes to cleaning house he is world-class. He dines exclusively on canned tuna, but if a subatomic particle of food lands on his carpet he and his vacuum cleaner descend like avenging gods. Even worse is direct sunlight, which tends to spark the poor fellow—not to mention the editing of this movie—into a firestorm of twitches and tics. Given his condition, why would anybody so patently out of whack with the world try his hand at the entirely worldly art of the scam?

The conception of this character is so desperately overworked that "Matchstick Men" all but dies under the weight of him. You can see why Cage took the role—there is so much to do onscreen, every moment begging to be crammed with dramatic business—and the unfortunate result is that he starts to get laughs he doesn't want. We don't pity Roy, we

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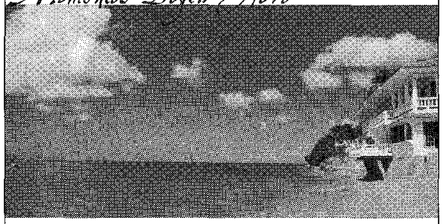

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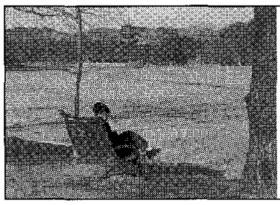

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don't like him, and we struggle to believe in him; the lasting impression of "Matchstick Men" is that an unembarrassable actor and a director of proven largesse decided, almost as a challenge, to lavish their ceaseless gifts on a hero and a setup that were simply too small and musty for their purposes. If Wagner had played it this safe, we would all be trooping off to the Met to see "The Window Washers of Nürnberg."

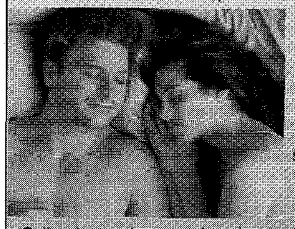
The good news is that "Matchstick Men" is saved. Not by the plot, which entails a con so long that you can spot it coming a mile off, but by the presence of Alison Lohman, who plays Roy's daughter, Angela. The fact that he even has a daughter is news to Roy, whose pregnant wife left him long ago. On the advice of his analyst (Bruce Altman), he attempts to make contact, whereupon Angela, now fourteen years old, walks—or, rather, skateboards—into his life. From her first, gliding arrival on the sidewalk, she graces this movie with the pleasure and the credibility that it craves. For one thing, she is, being a teen-ager, a mess, and when she begins to hang out chez Roy he realizes that the noble sacrifices demanded by love may include the unregulated use of chunky-fudge ice cream in the home.

Angela, for her part, thought that her father was dead. "I'm not dead. I'm in antiques," he says, with the hangdog air of one who can hardly tell the difference. She sees right through that lie and, to her delight, extracts the truth: Daddy is a grifter. "You don't seem like a bad guy," she says. "That's what makes me good at it," he replies. Angela's pride in him strikes me as fair enough, and I could just about go with the scene, tenderly handled by Scott, in which the parent coaches his child in a casual con, with the aid of a scrunched-up lottery ticket. Again, however, matters are stretched too far, and even I refused to buy the notion that Roy would enlist his daughter's help in a major shakedown and thus imperil her life.

Lohman has a round face and a rapid smile, and she strolls about without stiffness or haste; how she can do all that and not look intolerably cute I have no idea. She was the best thing about last year's "White Oleander," but watching the film was like wading through custard, and you would never have guessed how upbeat she could be. She has a tricky final appearance in "Matchstick Men," in the aftermath of a climactic twist; the scene requires her to be older and wiser, without that faint breeze of naughtiness, and for once, I think, Scott is asking her to do too much. But then the whole picture has, by now, slipped into creepy territory, daring to suggest that crime—principally, the crime of deceit—is somehow therapeutic, and that both the scammer and the scammed can be conned into health and happiness. If this were a political movie, that would be a radical, if cynical, proposition; down among the little people, though, where the matchstick men ply their trade, who is going to be fooled?

The young British director Michael Winterbottom is a man in a hurry. He surges from one project to another, every bit as promiscuous as Ridley Scott in his genre-hopping. The difference is that Winterbottom functions on the sort of budget that would cover Nicolas Cage's salad bill, and that, where Scott is fitfully uninspired, Winterbottom seems to be thrashing in the grip of a compulsion. His films, from "Welcome to Sarajevo" to "24-Hour Party People," can be coarse and loaded but they are never tired, and now, with "In This World," he has made his best and most driven picture to date.

It is about a young Afghan named Jamal, who is played by a young Afghan named Jamal. Be careful, however, about treating this film as a documentary. It certainly sounds like one in the first scene, where a voice-over informs us that "fifty-three thousand Afghan refugees live in Shamshatoo camp near the city of Peshawar, in Pakistan." Once Jamal is picked out from the crowd, however, his story becomes alarmingly focussed. He claims to be sixteen but could be eleven or twelve, although any patina of innocence is burned away by his exploits. He



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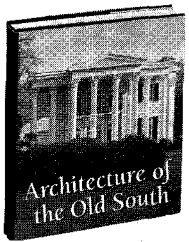

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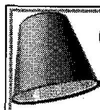

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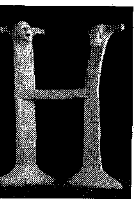

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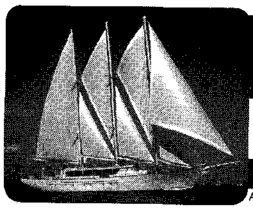

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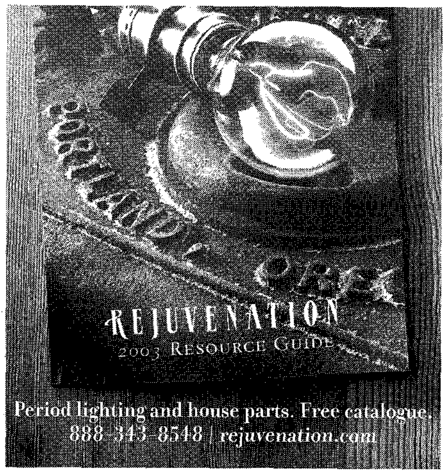

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and a young man called Enayatullah are sent off from Peshawar in search of a better, or at any rate a more lucrative, life in London. They travel by land and sea, packed at one point into a cargo of oranges, at another into a flock of dirty sheep—"very delicious," Enayatullah says from his corner of the truck. The worst part is a slow voyage from Istanbul to Trieste, where a herd of humans is locked into a metal crate like drygoods. Among them is a baby, who survives the trip, and its parents, who do not. Such horror stories have surfaced in headlines in recent years, but this is the first time that they have been made imaginable. People-smuggling is one step up from slave-trading, and it thrives on the soft verges of Europe.

All of which might deter you from watching "In This World," but take heart: this movie is not a sermon. Winterbottom is so alive to Jamal's predicament—to his thin-eyed, Artful Dodger's knack for survival—that this simplest of dramas makes most of the films I have seen this year look half asleep. The journey across Iran and Turkey is startling and interplanetary; one shot, of a road curving into lightning and stone-dark skies, could be a highlight from the creation of the world. Winterbottom thinks nothing of switching from a kind family on the Turkish frontier, who take in the Afghans, feed them, play soccer with them, and sprinkle water and drops of fire to bless their departure, to a sudden hellish slog over the mountains, filmed by night in black-and-white, with snow up to our heroes' knees and gunshots flaring in the distance.

The point of this overwhelming picture is not, I suspect, to tweak your conscience about the kid on the subway who tugged at your sleeve last week, chattering in Pashto or Farsi, and whom you smoothly left in your wake. It is, more boldly, to leave you feeling guilty about just how much world exists out there to which you have not dreamed of paying attention. There is no excuse for knowing solely what you have; look outward rather than homeward, whatever Thomas Wolfe might say, and you will find a cavalcade of pains—and also, to be fair, the joyous sight of Jamal, on a Tehran street, licking an ice-cream cone the size of a small Christmas tree. For once, life is sweet. ♦

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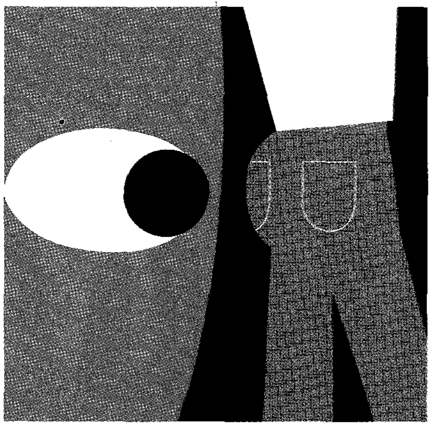
THE BACK PAGE BY PAUL RUDNICK

QUEER EYE FOR THE WHOLE WORLD

“Queer Eye for the Straight Guy,” the television show in which a quippy platoon of gay tastemakers (the Fab Five) assists clueless heterosexual dudes in matters of fashion, décor, and grooming, has become the biggest hit on cable. The show has been such a smash, why not try broadening the scope? A few spinoff possibilities:

1. *Queer Eye for Iraq:* “Yes, we know you’re fundamentalist Muslims, but what’s with the untamed eyebrows? Tweeze and shape, and then maybe you’ll start promoting education for women. But we love the classic head-wraps, the knee-skimming Bea Arthur vests, and those jihad-ready harem pants—it isn’t about hating the West, it’s about *drape*. Let’s face it, wasn’t Saddam just a tad Sonny Bono by way of Tony Orlando with a Yosemite Sam/Village People leatherman mustache? Didn’t the droopy facial hair and the Connie Francis dye job scream, ‘Even if I’m not hiding plutonium I still look like a midtown doorman’? As for Uday and Qusay, well, let’s just say it—they weren’t exactly the Hilton sisters. Here’s our fashion fatwa: no more strafing embassies, spitting at U.S soldiers, or wearing sandals with tube socks in the mosque, ’kay?”

2. *Queer Eye for Arnold Schwarzenegger:* “You work out obsessively, you’re rumored to have a wild sex life, and you love Arnold Schwarzenegger movies—you’re practically gay already! But here’s a tip: ditch the cadre of heavy-artillery advisers, forget about taking a serious position on the economy, and bring back Conan the Barbarian. The crafts-project jockstrap, the studded rawhide bicep bracelets, the macho-Cher headband with the just-for-fun noseguard—to the queer eye it says, ‘I am California.’ If you want to win, dress like a car.”



3. *Queer Eye for Israel and the Palestinians:* “Ladies. Cuddlekins. Can we retract the press-on nails, put down the teasing combs, and leave the lavatory? Think of yourselves as Barbra Streisand versus Katharine Hepburn—duelling divas, yet they shared an Oscar. Israel, you’re proud, you’re undaunted, you’re kibbutz-chic, but remember: all of those extra pockets on your cargo pants don’t really need to be filled with grenades. And Palestine—you’re beleaguered, you’re feisty, you’re looking for love, but strapping dynamite around your midsection doesn’t just kill innocent people; it ruins the line of your safari-casual top. Our idea of a suicide bomber is whoever’s been styling Britney Spears—is that what we want the world to look like?”

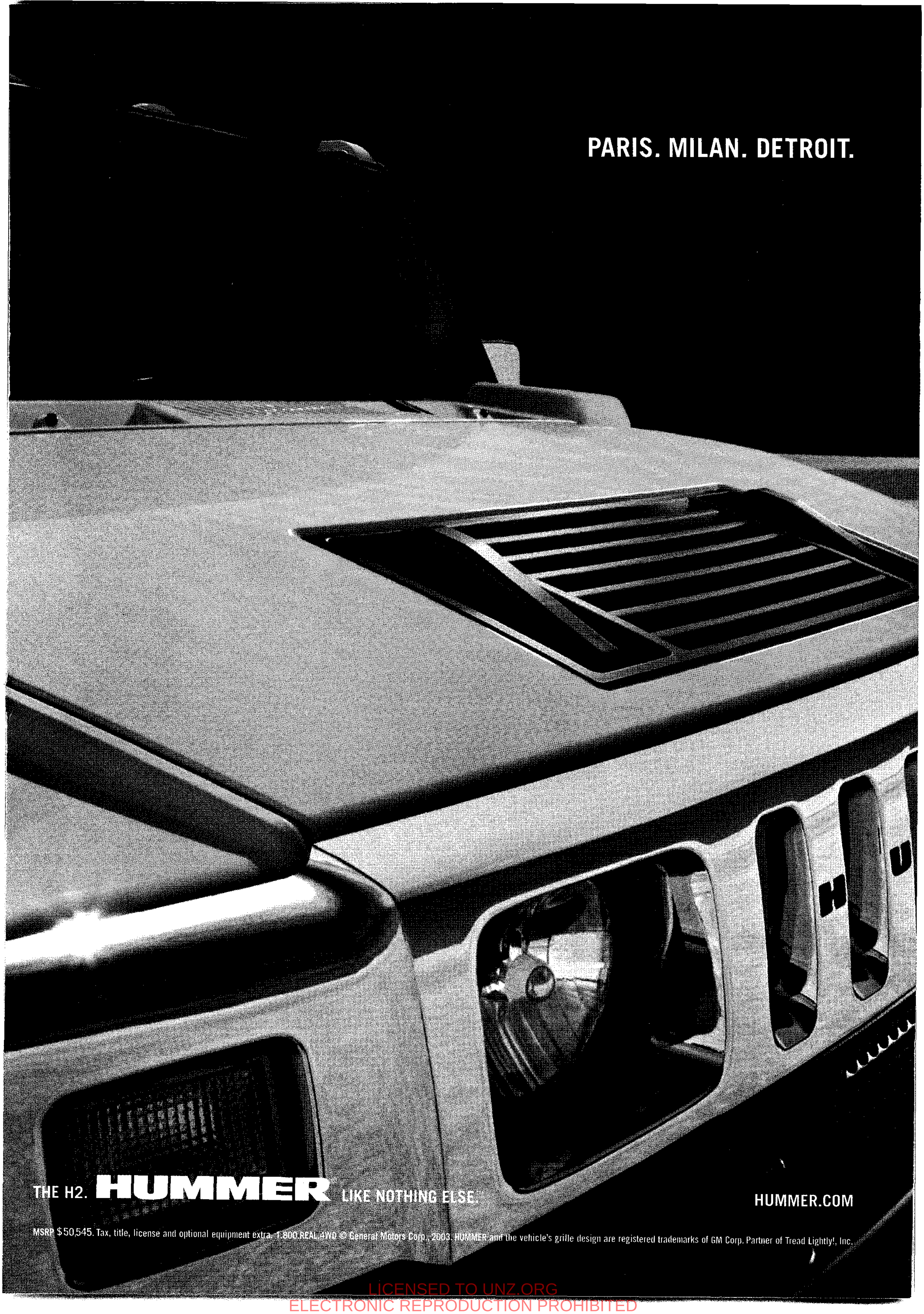
4. *Queer Eye for the Blackout:* “Wouldn’t it have been heavenly if, when the lights came back on, everyone had moisturized?”

5. *Queer Eye for the Royal Family:* “Queen Elizabeth, don’t touch a thing, because sometimes everything should match. Prince Charles and Camilla, we love the navy blazers, the muddy hiking boots, and all of that scratchy tweed on both of you; we think it’s an out-there statement on lesbian marriage. And as for those little Princes: yum. Double yum. Very Hilfiger. Very askew rep tie, rumpled khakis, and I-just-rolled-out-of-bed-with-an-ambitious-commoner hair.”

6. *Queer Eye for Hillary Rodham Clinton:* “Darling. Girlfriend. Sir. Yes, we know that black pants suits always work: they’re slimming, they travel, and you can just toss a pastel sweater over your shoulders for the ‘Today’ show, as if you’re saying, ‘You see, Katie, I’m not just an Orthodox rabbi with highlights.’ But let’s branch out—why not a black pants suit with a fuchsia superhero cape? Or add jumbo 24k. gold Idi Amin-style epaulets. Or a flash of lacy purple bra that tells us, ‘Fine, I’m a future President, but sometimes I enjoy wearing women’s clothing.’ ”

7. *Queer Eye for George W. Bush:* “The Marlboro stiff jeans. The 1978 San Francisco leather bomber jacket. The huge, state-fair-prize-heifer Republican rodeo belt buckles. It’s all too G.I. Joe on furlough, Ken in Alaska, the plaid-flannel-and-canvas-work-gloves-for-Father’s-Day section of the Sears catalogue. It cries, ‘I’m responsible, I’ve stopped drinking, and Laura thinks that my penis is just the right size, thank you.’ So let’s loosen up, let’s tell all those other countries that the leader of the free world is lemon-cashmere confident. When you’re jogging around the Washington Monument, let’s try a Bruce Weber wifebeater-T-and-surfer-Jams combo, with all of those hunky Secret Service guys in plaid boxers and sweat. And why not deliver your next State of the Union address in an open collar, a Gucci-narrow peacoat, and a who-needs-France baseball cap worn backward? You could be the first unstoppable freedom fascist to say ‘I love me in a mink-lined vintage acid-washed Levi’s jacket.’ The planet is looking to you, so work the tan, bleach the teeth, and always and forever, after your ‘May God bless us all’ finale, blow a big fat kiss. *Mwah!*” ♦

RICHARD McGUIRE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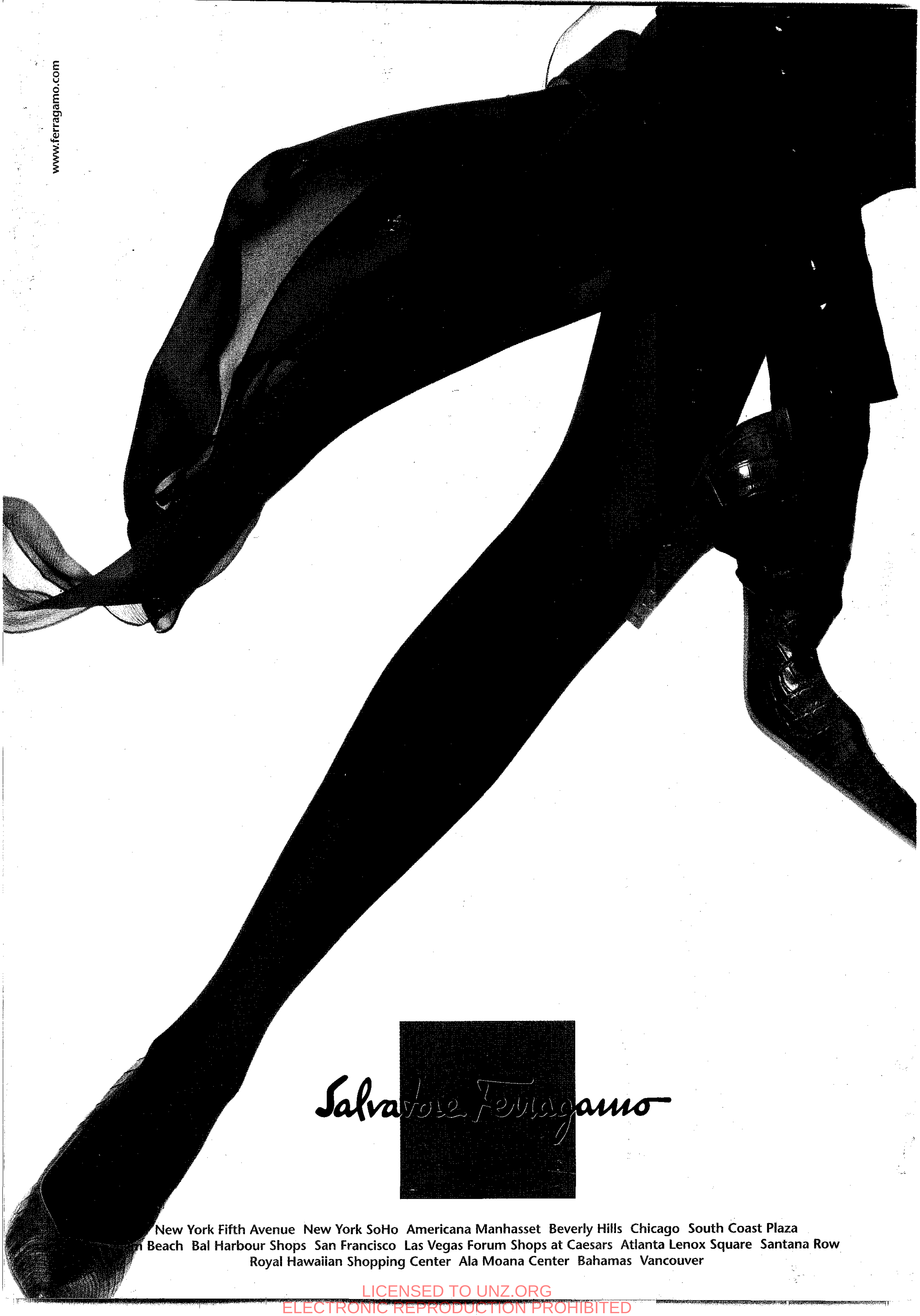
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